NATION

10 dead as M'rashtra reels under floods

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BUSINESS

Fitch warns of big strain on pharma over US tariffs

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SPORTS

Gill is vice-captain, Shreyas out of Asia cup

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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India & China ties thaw as Delhi's rift with US grows

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

India and China have agreed to take a series of steps aimed at stabilising ties between the two Asian giants, which include boosting economic cooperation and resuming suspended engagements. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Tuesday that the two sides have also agreed to restore direct flight connectivity between the Chinese mainland and India "at the earliest".

The announcements between two Asian giants came amid growing estrangement in ties between India and the US over President Donald Trump's policies on trade and tariff.

China has also agreed to ease restrictions to facilitate supply of rare earth minerals and fertilisers to India with Chinese Foreign Minister Wany Yi conveying the forward movement on the matter to his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, sources said on Tuesday. Wang, on a two-day visit to India, gave the assurance during his talks with Jaishankar on Monday and also meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi in a post, said that India-China relations have made steady progress guided by respect for each other's interests and sensitivities in the last 10 months. "I look forward to our next meeting in Tianjin on the sidelines of the SCO Summit. Stable, predictable, constructive ties between India and China will contribute significantly to regional as well as global peace and prosperity," Modi added.

No change on Taiwan

Meanwhile, government sources said that there was no change in India's position on Taiwan and New Delhi's relationship with it focuses on economic, technology and cultural ties. The clarification came after the Chinese foreign ministry misquoted External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as saying during his talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, that Taiwan is part of China. —*PTI*

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during a meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

1 dead in Belagavi as house collapses amid heavy rains

BELAGAVI, 19 AUG:

Heavy rains claimed the life of 50-year-old old Faridabhanu Shakilahmed Kanawad, a resident of Gokak town in Belagavi on Tuesday. Reports said that a wall of her house constructed with bricks and stones came down in the heavy rains causing the fatal incident. Two other members of the family who got stuck in the debris were brought out bythe neighbours and admitted to the government hospital in Gokak town. Gokak Tahasildar visited the spot and officials are evaluating the value of the collapsed house, to estimate the aid to be paid. —*Salar News*

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SC raps misdirected lab test on audio of ex-Manipur CM

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the Central Forensic Science Laboratory's (CFSL) examination of audio recordings alleging former Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh's involvement in ethnic violence in the state, terming the exercise "misdirected." A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and Satish Chandra Sharma clarified that it had only asked for voice sample verification, not the authenticity of the audio clips. "We want to know if the voice in the clip matches the admitted voice of the individual," the court said, adding the CFSL appeared confused and was focusing incorrectly on verifying video authenticity. —*PTI*

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GBA won't interfere with functioning of 5 City corps

New amendment passed in Assembly removes GBA 'control'

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

The Karnataka Assembly on Tuesday passed the Greater Bengaluru Governance (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aimed at clarifying that the newly formed Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) will not interfere in the functioning of the five new City corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024.

The amendment was introduced by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who also oversees Bengaluru development. He said the clarification was necessary after a PIL was filed challenging the Act. "Though the court did not accept the PIL, we are making this amendment to avoid confusion in future. The Mayor and the corporation members must have full powers as per the Constitution," Shivakumar said.

The 2024 Act came into effect on 15 May and allowed for the creation of up to seven City corporations in the Greater Bengaluru Area, limited to the jurisdiction of the BBMP. The government has constituted five: Bengaluru West, South, North, East, and Central City Corporations. The GBA is headed by the Chief Minister and will coordinate between corporations, with the Bengaluru development minister as vice-chairperson.

The amendment removes the clause suggesting that GBA would have authority over the corporations.

However, BJP MLA CN Ashwath Narayan criticised the move, calling it unconstitutional. "The state has taken over powers of local bodies. There's no constitutional provision for a body like GBA," he said.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka also objected to the use of the English term "Greater Bengaluru" and called the creation of GBA an attack on decentralisation.

In response, Congress MLA Rizwan Arshad clarified the GBA's role was limited to coordination. "Corporations are autonomous. They can collect and spend their taxes independently," he said.

Shivakumar also assured that new areas would be added to Greater Bengaluru after elections for the five corporations, avoiding overlap with current panchayat terms. —*PTI*

Assembly passes gig workers' Bill; proposes 1%-5% fee on online aggregators

Bengaluru University renamed after ex-PM Manmohan Singh

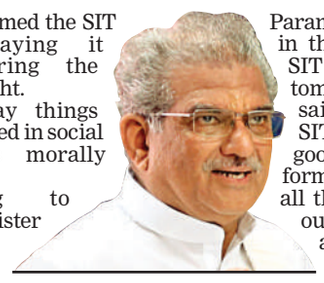
Dharmasthala head calls burial allegations 'baseless'

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

Veerendra Heggade, Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala Manjunatha Swamy Temple, dismissed claims of mass murders, rapes and burials across the temple town as "baseless and false". Heggade also dismissed allegations regarding the Soujanya case.

He welcomed the SIT probe, saying it would bring the truth to light.

"The way things are projected in social media is morally wrong."



Reacting to Home Minister G Parameshwara's statement in the Assembly that the SIT would get to the bottom of the issue, Heggade said, "We welcomed the SIT the same day. It's good that the State has formed it and once and for all the truth should come out. It's not good that allegations are made and they remain that way."

Soujanya, 17, a second-year Pre-University student of the Sri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara College was allegedly raped and murdered on 9 October, 2012. Protests are being organised now seeking justice for the girl. —*PTI*

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'WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM'

Bill timelines: SC raps TN, Kerala on Prez's deadline

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the objections raised by Tamil Nadu and Kerala to a presidential reference seeking clarity on whether fixed timelines can be imposed on governors and the president for acting on bills passed by state legislatures.

At the same time, the court on Tuesday questioned the Centre and the attorney general over the long pendency of bills passed by assemblies with governors, underscoring the limitations of constitutional courts in situations where legislation has been pending since 2020.

A five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice B R Gavai, and comprising Justices Surya Kant, Vikram Nath, P S Narasimha and A S Chandurkar, began hearing the reference made under Article 143(1) of the Constitution, through which President Droupadi Murmu sought the court's advisory opinion.

"When the Hon'ble President herself is seeking reference, then what is the problem? Are you seriously contesting this?" the bench asked, adding, "It is very clear that we are sitting in an advisory jurisdiction."

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The reference followed concerns over prolonged delays or indefinite withholding of state legislation by governors. The April 8 verdict had, for the first time, set a three-month deadline for the President to decide on bills referred by governors.

The bench clarified that it would express views only on the legal question, not revisit its earlier verdict.

The Centre, in its written submission, opposed judicially imposed deadlines, arguing such steps could result in "constitutional disorder", with one organ of the state assuming powers not conferred by the Constitution.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the issue has arisen for the first time in the republic's history. "There may be deviations in any branch — legislature, executive, or judiciary — but we must address these issues holistically," he said, urging the court not to delve into facts of individual cases.

The hearing will continue. —*PTI*

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Passengers being rescued after the Monorail came to a halt between two station in Mumbai on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

TRAIN GETS STUCK MID-TRACK, 200 RESCUED AFTER 3 HOURS IN MUMBAI

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

A Mumbai Monorail carrying over 200 passengers came to a halt between Mysore Colony and Bhakti Park stations on Tuesday evening due to a power failure amid heavy rains, triggering panic and a major rescue operation.

The incident occurred around 6.15 PM. The train, stranded on an elevated track, left passengers trapped for nearly three hours. Rescue efforts began after an hour, with fire brigade teams deploying three snorkel cranes. All passengers were evacuated safely by 9pm .

Panic gripped the air-conditioned train as the power failure led to a shutdown of ventilation, leaving passen-gers struggling to breathe. "Some people fainted, others tried to break windows. There was no communica-tion from the authorities," a passenger said. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis assured that an inquiry would be conducted. —*PTI*

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Centre to ban all money-based gaming sites

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Union Cabinet has approved the Online Gaming Bill, to regulate the growing digital gaming sector and putting a stop to online betting. Further, the bill will ban all money-based gaming transactions, with banks and financial institutions being prevented from processing and transferring funds for money-based online games.

According to sources, the new bill will empower the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology as the nodal regulator for the online gaming sector, and give authorities the power to block any unregistered or illegal site operating in India.

The Bill also proposes a complete ban on advertisements promoting real money gaming, continued promotion of E-sports and non-monetary skill-based games and strict action against unregistered or illegal gaming platforms.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

A legislation to this effected is expected to be introduced in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

UNDER GOVERNMENT SCRUTINY

Online gaming has been under scrutiny ever since the government imposed a 28 per cent GST on such platforms in October 2023. From FY25, winnings from online games are being taxed at 30 per cent, and offshore gaming operators have been brought within the Indian tax net. In December 2023, new criminal provisions under BNS made unauthorised betting a criminal offence. —*PTI*

Ex-SC judge Sudershan is INDIA bloc's VP candidate

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Former Supreme Court judge B Sudershan Reddy is the joint candidate of the Opposition for the Vice-Presidential polls, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge announced on Tuesday, as he called the upcoming election for the country's second-highest office an "ideological battle".

Reddy is a former judge of the Supreme Court and the first Lokayukta of Goa. He is also on the Board of Trustees of the International Arbitration and Mediation Centre in Hyderabad. Reddy is scheduled to arrive in New Delhi later on Tuesday evening and meet with various Opposition leaders. He will file his nomination on 21 August.

The joint Opposition is expected to hold a meeting on Wednesday. "Whenever democracy and the Constitution are under attack, Opposition parties unite to fight against it. So we have decided to field a good candidate," he added.

NDA has picked Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan.

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RAIN DISTRIBUTION UNEVEN

India records 101% rain in monsoon surplus

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

India's cumulative rainfall remains in surplus this monsoon season, standing at 101 per cent of the Long-Period Average (LPA), a notch higher than last week's 100 per cent, according to a report by ICICI Bank Global Markets.

The distribution of rainfall, however, remains uneven across the country. Northwest India leads with a 13 per cent surplus, followed by Southern India at 8 per cent above LPA and Central India at 4 per cent above LPA. In contrast, the East and Northeast region lag behind, reporting an 18 per cent deficit. Out of the 36 meteorological subdivisions, 8 have received excess rainfall, 23 reported normal rainfall, and four remain in the deficient category.

People cling to a vehicle to make way through a waterlogged road in Mumbai on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

On a weekly basis, rainfall was 9.5 per cent higher than the same period last year. The India Meteorological Department has forecast good rainfall in the coming week, including in the East and Northeast regions, which have so far remained below normal.

As per the report, reservoir levels across the country are also showing healthy trends. As of 14 August, the live storage in 150 key reservoirs stood at 135.3 billion cubic meters, which is 74.1 per cent of total capacity. This is 9 per cent higher than the same time last year. —*PTI*

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2 dead, 5 injured in Haveri bus crash

HAVERI, 19 AUG

Two people lost their lives and five others were seriously injured when a private bus crashed into a road divider in Haveri district, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place near Motebennur village on Monday evening. The bus, carrying 36 passengers, struck the divider with force, leaving several trapped and injured. Emergency teams quickly arrived at the scene, and the wounded were taken to Haveri District Hospital for treatment. Haveri Police stated: "Two people died after a private bus collided with a road divider. Five others sustained serious injuries and are receiving treatment." An investigation is under way to establish the cause of the accident. Further updates are awaited.—*ANI*

Medico dies by suicide at her hostel in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 19 AUG

A 27-year-old postgraduate medical student, identified as Priya from the City, has been found dead in her hospital hostel at the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS). She was discovered lying on her bed on Monday night and rushed to the emergency and trauma centre, where she was pronounced dead. Preliminary examinations indicate that Priya died from an overdose of medication prescribed for her depression. BIMS director, Dr Ashok Kumar Shetty, stated, "Priya had been on duty until 4.30pm before returning to her hostel." It has been reported that Priya previously attempted to take her own life by cutting herself with a sharp blade and received treatment at Bengaluru Medical College. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: SALAR

Six arrested for Rs 30L jewellery heist in Bangarpet

KOLAR, 19 AUG

Bangarpet police have apprehended six individuals, recovering gold valued at over Rs 30 lakh. The suspects are Nageena, 45; Naveena, 43; Mubeena Taj, 25; Nagma, 25; Zareena Taj, 36; and Nazeer Pasha, 38, are all residents of Kolar in the State. On 14 August, they allegedly visited Srinivasa Gupta's jewellery shop under the pretense of buying. While the owner was distracted, some members of the group accessed the locker room and absconded with a box of jewels. Gupta promptly reported it to the police. Inspector R Dayananda and his team reviewed CCTV footage, leading to the arrest. The accused have been remanded to judicial custody. —*Salar News*

4-year-old girl succumbs to rabies

DAVANAGERE, 19 AUG

A four-year-old girl from Davanagere has died of rabies, four months after being mauled by a dog, a senior health official confirmed. The child, Khadeera Banu, was bitten on her face and body while playing outside her home in Shastri Layout on 27 April. She was first admitted to a private hospital and later referred to the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (IGICH) in Bengaluru in May, where tests confirmed rabies, director Dr Sanjay KS said. Banu was discharged for home care after her condition stabilised, but was readmitted in August in an unresponsive state and succumbed on Sunday. Doctors identified it as a case of "dumb rabies", which causes paralysis. IGICH clarified her treatment there was free, though earlier private care may have cost the family heavily. —*PTI*

STATE PASSES GIG WORKERS BILL

Slew of Bills passed in the Assembly; DKS says he'll lead a delegation to Delhi over Mahadayi

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

The State Legislative Assembly passed the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2025 on Tuesday. The legislature aims to protect the rights of platform-based gig workers, and to place obligations on aggregators in relation to the workers' social security, occupational health, and safety.

The Bill proposes a welfare fee of 1 to 5 percent of the payout to the worker during each transaction, for different categories of aggregators or platforms.

"This cannot be equally applied to everyone as Swiggy, Zomato businesses will be different from e-commerce and so on," Labour Minister Santosh Lad said while introducing the Bill. "They are different kinds of businesses. So 1-5 per cent will not be levied equally on everyone. We will discuss and decide on it while framing rules."

He noted the seriousness of the Bill. "Gig economy, delivery services -- e-commerce or food delivery -- are growing in a big way year-on-year. According to the NITI Ayog report, by 2029-30, about 23.5 million workers are expected to be part of it. As per the information we have in Karnataka, it is about 4 lakh gig workers."

Lad added that an aggregator cannot terminate a gig worker from service without prior notice of 14 days and without providing valid reasons in writing, as per the Bill.

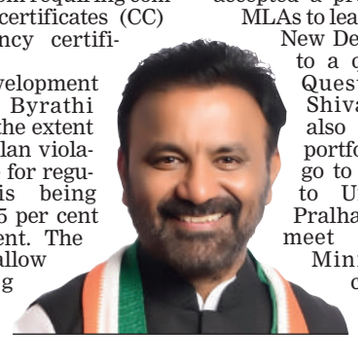
The Bill is applicable to services provided by aggregator or platform -- ride sharing services; food and grocery delivery services; logistics services; e-Market place for wholesale/retail sale of goods and/or services - Business to Business / Business to Consumer (B2B/B2C); professional activity provider; healthcare; travel and hospitality; and content and media services.

K'TAKA ASSEMBLY MONSOON SESSION

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

The Assembly passed the Karnataka Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Bill that will allow municipal commissioners to regularise unlawful buildings by levying a penalty. It also exempts small properties from requiring commencement certificates (CC) and occupancy certificates (OC).

Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh said the extent of building plan violations eligible for regularisation is being raised from 5 per cent to 15 per cent. The Bill would allow regularising buildings on small sites. The size would be specified in the rules, but it would not exceed 20x30 ft. and 30x40ft.



PORTS BILL

The Karnataka Ports (Landing and Shipping Fees) (Amendment) Bill was also passed. The Bill aims to revise the fees on goods shipped in such intervals and to increase or decrease the percentage of fee by the Government by notification if fees are not revised within time.

MAHADAYI

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that the State has every right to use its share of Mahadayi waters as he accepted a proposal by some MLAs to lead a delegation to New Delhi. Responding to a question during Question Hour, Shivakumar who also hold the water portfolio said, "Lets go to Delhi. You talk to Union Minister Pralhad Joshi. Let's meet the Union Ministers concerned."

—*Salar News with Agencies*

BU is now Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University

The Assembly passed a Bill to rename Bengaluru City University as Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University, in honour of the former prime minister, who passed away earlier this year. Renaming was first announced during the State budget on 7 March. The Cabinet had approved renaming it July. The move makes this the first university in the country to bear Singh's name. However, the Opposition BJP objected. Opposition leader R Ashoka said naming an existing university after Singh does not honour him.

SOUHARDA SAHAKARI BILL PASSED

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

The Karnataka Souharda Sahakari (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was also passed by the Assembly to make Souharda Cooperatives maintain 20 percent of the total deposits as State Statutory Liquid Reserve to manage increasing cases of misappropriation.

Among other things, the Bill also provides for funds which are not immediately required for use by a Souharda Co-operative, a democratically elected organisation, to be invested or deposited outside its business.

The Bill had earlier been sent back by the Governor, asking the State to "reconsider" and "modify" it.

In December 2023, Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna told the Assembly that he planned to do away with the federation of the self-regulated Souharda institutions due to regulatory concerns. Rajanna said the government had limited control over the Souhardas, unlike the other cooperatives. "We have powers for registration and cancellation only," he had said.

It may be recalled that in 2021, the then BJP government amended the Souharda law to restrict a cooperative member from holding more than 5% of the total share capital. The government then also introduced a clause to disqualify defaulting members.

According to the Karnataka State Souharda Federal Cooperative Ltd, there are 6,500 Souharda institutions in Karnataka. Of them, 1,001 have defaulted, 1,148 are not working and 296 are under liquidation.

The Assembly also passed the Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance (Amendment) Bill, with an intention to extend the provisions of the said original Act for a further period of ten years.

The original act aims to curb illegal strikes, ensuring the delivery of essential services to the people.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

Tank Conservation Bill passed as BJP stages a walkout

The Assembly cleared the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill as the BJP walked out to protest it. The BJP claimed that its provisions would destroy the lakes, especially those in City. The Bill presented by the Minor Irrigation Minister NS Boseraju redefines the buffer zones of tanks (lakes). "This government has surrendered to the real estate lobby," BJP MLA and former Minister S Suresh Kumar alleged. Boseraju clarified that the government was using the buffer zones for government purposes and is not going to give them to any private organisations.

Rains pound State: Schools shut as infra crumbles

BELAGAVI, 19 AUG

Heavy rains across the State destroyed infrastructure and severely impacted daily life on Tuesday. Schools and colleges were shut in seven districts.

BELAGAVI

All six major rivers in Belagavi district - Krishna, Markandeya, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha, Vedaganga and Doodhaganga rivers - rose to massive heights, inundating nine bridges and disconnecting 18 villages. All the 18 villages were from Chikkodi taluk.

The rivers has swollen due to incessant downpour in Belagavi and south Maharashtra.

The water level in Malaprabha dam was just 2ft below its brims level, prompting officials to release 5,500 cusecs of water on Tuesday. 4,000 cusecs more than what was released on Monday.

BIDAR

District-in-charge Minister Eshwara Khandre directed the administration to ensure speedy repair works, after heavy rainfall over the past few days Bidar district damaged roads and cut off power connections.

The minister instructed the Deputy Commissioner to provide Rs 5,000 immediate relief to families affected by the rains.

SCHOOLS SHUT

Schools Anganwadi's and pre-universities (PUC) were shut in Dharwad, Chikkamagaluru, Belagavi, Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, Bidar, and Kodagu districts on Tuesday owing to heavy rainfalls in the areas.

In Yadgir, the district administration declared a two-day holiday for 19-20 August in the interest of safety.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

Protests at Freedom Park on Tuesday: Snake rescuers demand honorarium and government IDs; Shepherds demand the State pass Shepherds Protection and Prevention of Atrocities Bill ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMAD ASAD/PTI***

Rowdies moved from Darshan's jail cell

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

In a significant security move, notorious rowdies housed in cells surrounding Kannada actor Darshan's barrack at Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in the City have been transferred to other facilities. This comes as a precautionary measure following recent controversies involving the actor.

Darshan is charged in the Renukaswamy murder case. Security around his cell has been intensified.

The move follows the emergence of photographs showing Darshan engaged in conversation with rowdy Wilson Garden Naga in jail, which went viral. These pictures depicted Darshan and the gangster smoking and sharing coffee and was met with Supreme Court's warning. —*Salar News*

BBMP Housing Scam: Ex-BJP leader files plaint

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

Alleging large-scale corruption in the Bengaluru Amrit Mahotsava housing scheme, former Bengaluru South BJP district president and ex-BBMP ruling party leader NR Ramesh has lodged a formal complaint with the Lokayukta against officials of the civic body's Welfare Department.

According to Ramesh, corrupt officials violated all legal procedures and transferred a massive sum of Rs 27.50 crore into the accounts of 550 ineligible beneficiaries through Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation.

The funds — meant to support genuine beneficiaries such as the poor and senior citizens — were allegedly diverted by then Assistant Commissioner (Welfare Department) Nagabhushan, who now serves as Assistant Revenue Officer in Mahadevapura Zone.

BBMP guidelines stipulate that subsidies must be released only after due scrutiny. However, Ramesh alleged that Nagabhushan bypassed procedures, and unilaterally released funds on 21 August.

Calling it a case of corruption, misuse of authority, and fabrication of records, Ramesh has urged the Lokayukta ADGP and IGP to take stringent legal action against Nagabhushan. —*Salar News*

MASS BURIALS CASE

Organised campaign targeting Dharmasthala: Dharmadhikari

BENGALURU, 19 AUG

Veerendra Heggade, Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala Manjunatha Swamy Temple said there was an "organised campaign" aimed at maligning the image of the temple town. He said it was carried out for over 14 years.

"Irked by the good work being done by us, some elements carry out false campaigns but we are unperturbed," he said.

Referring to recent videos of a former sanitation worker claiming to have buried hundred bodies in Dharmasthala, he said, "This is impossible. There is a popular belief that if one dies in Dharmasthala, they will get salvation. Whenever there is a death, we used to inform the panchayat and they do due diligence and bury the body."

He welcomed Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's statement about a conspiracy to defame Dharmasthala.

"They want the youth to turn away from the faith," Heggade rued. "We are shocked and surprised the way things were depicted. Social media is a very powerful medium and many of our well-wishers say that we have not used social media to publicise our good work. The work carried out in society is our duty, it's a commitment and service. We have reached all the villages and touched 55 lakh families through various social works."

Veerendra Heggade, Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala claimed that those conspiring want the youth to turn away from the faith and added that the temple will cooperate with the investigation ***PHOTO: PTI***

> **We know from our sources as to who are behind these conspiracies but we don't have proof, as such we can't make any comments. It's for the SIT to prove.... Truth will prevail, and these conspiracies will come to an end**
>
> -Veerendra Heggade, Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala Manjunatha Swamy Temple

He added that the temple is ready to cooperate with the investigation. "We have opened all our records. There are no illegal activities happening in Dharmasthala".

He also dismissed suggestions that the controversy had taken a political turn.

"No I don't think so. Congress leaders have also come here and so did the JD(S) leaders. Some people want to defame the temple and all parties have come in support of the temple," Heggade said.

Reiterating that faith in Dharmasthala remains unaffected, Heggade said, There is no change in the crowd or customs." Heggade expressed satisfaction with the pace of inquiry. "The Home Minister has made a statement. I believe an interim report is given and soon the final report will be out."

"The smear campaign will end as allegations are turning out to be false, and people have come forward now in large numbers in support of the temple," he said.

Responding to renewed calls for justice in the Soujanya murder case, Heggade said, "When we came to know that such a thing has happened we informed the government the same day. Allegations on our families are baseless.... These are vicious campaigns."

He said even CBI probe had been done earlier. "We have cooperated and we welcomed all kinds of probe." —*PTI*

SIT busts false reports about witness

The SIT said the complainant and witness did not say that a group from Tamil Nadu pressurised him to make a fabricated complaint. Reports claimed that the complainant had confessed to the SIT that a group approached him in 2023 and questioned him about alleged burials. He reportedly said that all burials were conducted lawfully, but the group reportedly pressured him to give false statements. The SIT has now denied such reports. "We have not received any such claim from the complainant. We are treating him as the complainant," an SIT officer said.

UNFILTERED

Some suspicious people from different parts of India are coming to Assam... We will not tolerate any fundamentalist activities or politics on sensitive issues, whether they come from Kerala, Mumbai or Delhi... If they step beyond the limits of the rules, they will be arrested

-Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam Chief Minister

Parliament passes Mines & Minerals Bill

The Bill was passed without a debate as the Oppn staged a walkout over SIR discussions

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Parliament on Tuesday passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2025 without much debate on it as the Opposition staged a walkout from Rajya Sabha demanding a discussion on the issue of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

The bill aims to further liberalise, modernise and make India's mineral sector more dynamic, especially with a focus on critical and strategic minerals.

The Bill, which seeks to amend the original Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, was passed in Lok Sabha on 12 August. Rajya Sabha passed it with a voice vote.

Members attend proceedings in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

About 19 members participated in the debate and shared some constructive suggestions.

According to sources, the Bill says that the leash holders appeal to state government for the addition of other minerals into the existing lease, adding that no additional fee will be required for the inclusion of critical and strategic minerals and other specified minerals.

Additionally, if the leash holder wants to include other minierals into the leash an amount equal to the royalty for that mineral must be paid. For auctioned mines, the holder must pay an additional auction premium for the mineral included.

Sources said that the payment requirements could be changed by the central government through a notification.

Additionally, the Lok Sabha passed a bill to set up an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Guwahati with the Union government providing capital support of Rs 550 crore, which will help set up the second IIM in the Northeast after Shillong.

After the passage of the bill through a voice vote, Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day.

Meanwhile, Opposition MPs of the INDIA bloc walked out of the Upper House soon after The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill 2025 was taken up for discussion.

Members of the Congress, Left parties, DMK, RJD, and the Trinamool Congress were among those who protested in the House, demanding that a discussion on the SIR issue be taken up.

Futhermore, Cooperation Minister Amit Shah told Parliament that two seats have been reserved for women and one for Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes on boards of multi-state cooperative societies, in response to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's questions on increasing SC/ST participation in cooperative sector. *—PTI with Agencies*

EAM Jaishankar embarks on 3-day visit to Russia

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday began a three-day visit to Moscow to strengthen the "time-tested" India-Russia partnership. The trip comes amid strains with Washington, after US President Donald Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent and imposed an additional 25 per cent penalty for New Delhi's continued purchase of Russian crude oil. EAM will co-chair the 26th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission with First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, laying the ground for President Vladimir Putin's planned visit to India later this year. ***—PTI***

Gujarat HC extends rapist Asaram's bail till 3 Sept

AHMEDABAD, 19 AUG

The Gujarat High Court has extended the temporary bail of self-styled godman Asaram Bapu until 3 September. Convicted in a 2013 rape case and sentenced to life imprisonment by a Gandhinagar court, his bail was initially set to expire on 21 August. The division bench, comprising Justices Ilesh Vora and PM Raval, took this decision while reviewing his health condition. Asaram is facing another interim bail hearing in a separate rape case before Rajasthan High Court on 29 August. His temporary bail was first granted due to medical reasons, as he had been hospitalised in critical condition. ***—PTI***

Voluntary relocation from forest areas soon?

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Indian government is examining a proposal to permit the voluntary relocation of human settlements from biodiversity-rich areas and designated wildlife corridors, aimed at alleviating pressure on vulnerable ecosystems while enhancing living conditions for local communities. This topic was discussed at the 85th meeting of Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife. Currently, voluntary relocation is restricted to core areas of tiger reserves, yet many populated landscapes lacking this provision experience ongoing human-wildlife conflicts, including crop destruction and threats to safety. ***—PTI***

Bihar gives nod to ₹100 uniform fee for prelims

PATNA, 19 AUG

Bihar cabinet on Tuesday approved a uniform fee of Rs 100 for preliminary examinations in all state recruitment drives. The decision, cleared in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, means no fee will be charged from candidates who qualify for the main examinations. The move, announced earlier by the CM on social media, is seen as significant ahead of upcoming assembly polls. Recruitment processes are conducted by commissions including Bihar Public Service Commission & Bihar Staff Selection Commission. The cabinet also approved plans for two five-star hotels in Rajgir and a five-star resort in Vaishali. ***—PTI***

Psephologist deletes 'vote theft' post, Cong mocked

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Sanjay Kumar, a psephologist associated with Lokniti-CSDS, issued an apology on Tuesday following the dissemination of erroneous data regarding the Maharashtra elections. Kumar's now-deleted post suggested a drastic decrease in voter turnout in two assembly constituencies compared to the recent Lok Sabha polls.

He tweeted, "I sincerely apologise for the tweets posted regarding Maharashtra elections. An error occurred while comparing data of 2024 LS and 2024 AS. The data in the row was misread by our Data team. The tweet has since been removed. I had no intention of dispersing any form of misinformation."

The apology ignited a backlash from the ruling BJP, with Amit Malviya, the party's IT department chief, dismissing it as anything but an "honest error." Malviya asserted: "The apology is in, and Sanjay Kumar is out. When was the last time this protégé of Yogendra Yadav got anything right? Convenient."

Kumar's claims indicated that in the Ramtek constituency, voter numbers plummeted from 4,66,203 in the Lok Sabha election to 2,86,931 during the assembly polls, marking a 38.45 per cent decrease. In Devlali, voters decreased from 4,56,072 to 2,88,141, drop of 36.82 per cent .

The controversy intensified amid a growing rift between the opposition INDIA bloc and Election Commission of India (ECI), with Rahul Gandhi accusing ECI of "vote chori" (vote theft), claims ECI firmly refuted. *—Agencies*

THAWING RELATIONS

Borders have been quiet: Doval says to Chinese FM

NEW DELHI/BEIJING, 19 AUG

There has been an "upward trend" in India-China relations in the past nine months as peace and tranquillity prevailed along Line of Actual Control, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval said on Tuesday during his talks on boundary issue with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, NAS Ajit Doval **PHOTO: PTI**

Doval and Wang held the talks under the framework of Special Representatives (SR) mechanism that came ahead of PM Narendra Modi's planned visit to China to attend Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.

"Borders have been quiet, there has been peace and tranquillity, our bilateral engagements have been more substantial," he said.

Wang's visit is largely seen as part of ongoing efforts by the two neighbours to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020.

Additionally multiple media outlets stated that China has agreed to ease restrictions to facilitate supply of rare earth minerals and fertilisers to India with Wang conveying the forward movement on the matter to EAM S Jaishankar, authoritative sources said.

However when reporters questioned Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning regarding the matter, she replied that although China is willing to cooperate and hold talks to maintain stability of supply chain, she was not aware of the reports on rare earth minerals.

Meanwhile, India-China relations are showing a positive trend towards returning to cooperation, Wang said. *—PTI with Agencies*

Rahul alleges 'partnership' between EC & BJP to steal votes

NAWADA, 19 AUG

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that a "partnership" has been going on between the Election Commission and BJP to "steal votes" and asserted Mahagathbandhan will not allow even one vote to be stolen in Bihar.

Addressing a gathering at Bhagat Singh Chowk here on the third day of his Voter Adhikar Yatra in Bihar, Gandhi said the right to vote has been given to the people by the Constitution and alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the Election Commissioners (EC) are "snatching" it away from them.

He alleged that the EC-BJP have "stolen" the elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. In Maharashtra, about 1 crore voters were added through magic between the Lok Sabha and assembly polls, Gandhi said.

He said Congress asked EC to provide machine-readable voters list and CCTV footage but it refused.

This country belongs to farmers, labourers, small traders and the youth, and not to a few billionaires like Adani and Ambani, he said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, party Bihar President Rajesh Kumar, and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra', in Nawada district, on Tuesday **PHOTO: X/@INCIndia**

Gandhi said all the wrong laws, GST, demonetisation are aimed at benefiting few billionaires.

Asserting that "vote chori" is an attack on 'Bharat Mata', Gandhi had warned chief election commissioner and two election commissioners of stern action when INDIA bloc forms government.

Intensifying his attack on EC, Gandhi had also said the whole country would ask the poll body for an affidavit and if given time, his party would bring out "vote chori" in every assembly and Lok Sabha constituency.

The yatra will conclude with a rally in Patna on 1 September. *—PTI*

What do they want- that infiltrators be made voters? That those who have died be kept as voters? Should those listed in two places be kept as voters? What do they want?

-Ravi Shankar Prasad, BJP MP

The BJP's only agenda is to use Nitish Kumar till the elections and then discard him to install their own chief minister

-Kanhaiya Kumar, Congress leader

RAGA WILL BE PM AFTER NEXT LS POLLS: TEJASHWI

PATNA, 19 AUG

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday urged the people of Bihar to make Congress leader Rahul Gandhi the next prime minister.

Addressing a rally in Nawada during Congress' Voter Adhikar Yatra, Yadav called on youth to oust NDA in upcoming assembly polls. Along by Gandhi and INDIA bloc leaders, he accused Nitish Kumar government of running Bihar like a "rickety car" and recycling opposition pledges as its own. He also alleged collusion between BJP & EC to delete names from electoral rolls. *—PTI*

TEJ WARNS TEJASHWI OF 'TRAITORS' IN RJD

PATNA, 19 AUG

Former Bihar Minister Tej Pratap Yadav has cautioned his younger brother, Tejashwi Yadav, against "traitors" within the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) as assembly elections approach. In a post on X, Tej Pratap, recently expelled from the RJD, claimed that conspiracies are underway to undermine his political career. He condemned violence against a driver associated with RJD MLA Vijay Kumar Singh during the Congress's 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'. Tej Pratap also announced a coalition with five minor parties for the forthcoming elections, pledging to engage in public dialogue and challenge opponents electorally. *—PTI*

INDIA BLOC VP CANDIDATE

B Sudershan Reddy: Ex-SC judge who presided courts for over 16 yrs

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Former Supreme Court judge B Sudershan Reddy, who was named as INDIA bloc's candidate for Vice-Presidential election, presided over country's constitutional courts for over 16 years.

Born in July 1946, Justice Reddy was appointed as a permanent judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on 2 May, 1995 and was later appointed as the chief justice of the Gauhati High Court on 5 December, 2005.

He became a Supreme Court judge on 12 January, 2007 and retired on 8 July, 2011.

He was enrolled as an advocate in Hyderabad with the Bar Council of Andhra Pradesh on 27 December, 1971.

The former top court judge worked as a government pleader in the high court during 1988-90 and also as additional standing counsel for Central government for six months during 1990.

B Sudershan Reddy **PHOTO: PTI**

- The former top court judge worked as a government pleader in the high court during 1988-90 and also as additional standing counsel for Central government for six months during 1990

He was a legal adviser and standing counsel for Osmania University.

Justice Reddy became the first Lokayukta of Goa in March 2013 but resigned within seven months citing personal reasons.

He is also in the Board of Trustees of International Arbitration and Mediation Centre, Hyderabad.

Justice Reddy is the joint candidate of the opposition parties for the Vice-Presidential polls, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge announced on Tuesday.

"All INDIA bloc parties has decided to have a common candidate, the decision has been taken unanimously. I am happy that all opposition parties have agreed to one name. It is a big achievement for democracy," he said. *—PTI*

TN: SC asked to revise old verdict is subversion

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday heard strong objections from Kerala and Tamil Nadu against the maintainability of a presidential reference seeking clarity on timelines for governors and the president to act on state legislature bills.

Senior advocate KK Venugopal, representing Kerala, argued that the presidential reference under Article 143 was unnecessary, as the Supreme Court had already interpreted Article 200 in previous cases involving Punjab, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu. He highlighted that, for the first time in the Tamil Nadu case, a specific deadline had been fixed for presidential assent.

"These issues are no longer res integra. If judgments already exist, a fresh reference is not maintainable," Venugopal said, adding that the government should have sought a review rather than a new opinion.

He further argued that under Article 74, the president is bound by the advice of council of ministers, making the reference effectively the government's, not the president's.

Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, for Tamil Nadu, called the reference a disguised "intra-court appeal," which undermined institutional integrity.

"This court is being asked to revise an earlier judgment under the cloak of a reference. That's a subversion," he said.

CJI BR Gavai clarified that the court would first examine the maintainability of the reference. Justice Narasimha noted the distinction between advisory and adjudicatory roles. *—PTI*

AP to have spl law against 'false claims' on social media

AMARAVATI, 19 AUG

Andhra Pradesh Home Minister V Anitha on Tuesday said that the government will introduce a special law against false propaganda on social media.

Anitha said that a fact-finding committee will be established to present facts before the public and counter misinformation that misleads people and creates insecurity across the state. "The government will bring a special law in the Assembly to act against false propaganda on social media," said Anitha, addressing a press conference. Unable to tolerate NDA coalition government's welfare schemes, some are allegedly misrepresenting facts on social media, she said, adding that strict action will be taken against such campaigns.

The minister cited alleged 'false claims' such as Amaravati being submerged and Prakasam Barrage gates falling apart were attempting to 'malign the government deliberately'. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Suspended IAS officer gets bail in liquor scam case

RANCHI, 19 AUG

Suspended IAS officer Vinay Kumar Choubey was granted default bail on Tuesday by a Ranchi court in a Rs 38-crore liquor scam after the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) failed to file a chargesheet within the stipulated time. Choubey, arrested on 20 May, will not be released immediately as he is also accused in a land-related case in Hazaribagh. His lawyer Devesh Ajmani said 92 days had passed without a chargesheet, making him entitled to bail under Supreme Court guidelines. The court directed him to submit two bonds of Rs 25,000 each, not leave Jharkhand without permission, and not change his mobile number. Choubey had challenged his arrest, arguing that the FIR lodged against him was not legally maintainable. *—PTI*

Headmaster ruptures student's eardrum in Kerala

KASARAGOD, 19 AUG

A government school headmaster in Kerala has been booked for allegedly assaulting a Class X student, leaving him with a ruptured eardrum, police confirmed on Tuesday. The incident occurred on 11 August at the Government Higher Secondary School, Kundamkuzhi, in Kasaragod district. According to the police, headmaster Ashokan noticed the 16-year-old boy playing with pebbles using his feet during the morning assembly. He allegedly called the student to the front, grabbed him by the collar, and slapped him, causing a severe ear injury. The boy later complained of acute ear pain and was taken to a government hospital, where doctors confirmed that his eardrum had ruptured. He is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital. *—PTI*

1 more arrested for jawan's assault at Meerut toll gate

MEERUT, 19 AUG

One more person has been arrested for the assault of an Army jawan in Uttar Pradesh. With the arrest of Neeraj Talian alias Bittu on Monday night, the total accused arrested has reached seven. An Army jawan was beaten up by the employees of Bhuni toll plaza in Sarurpur on Sunday. Kapil, a soldier from Meerut and posted in Srinagar, was on his way to join duty. Kapil was heading to Delhi airport when his car was caught in a queue. He soldier asked the toll booth staff to clear the queue faster, leading to an altercation. The toll booth was fined Rs 20 lakh by the NHAI. *—PTI*

Haryana suspends internet after teacher's death

CHANDIGARH, 19 AUG

The Haryana government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of mobile internet, bulk SMS and dongle services in Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri districts for 48 hours, following public outrage over the death of a 19-year-old playschool teacher. Voice calls, however, will remain unaffected. Manisha, who had been missing since 11 August after leaving school to enquire about admission at a nursing college, was found dead in a field in Bhiwani on 13 August. Her death sparked widespread anger, with residents staging road blockades and opposition parties demanding a CBI inquiry. Investigations took a new turn on Monday after police recovered a suicide note in a bag near Manisha's body, along with her Aadhaar card and documents. Police said she had purchased insecticide, traces of which were confirmed in her viscera samples. They suggested suicide as the cause of death. *—PTI*

10 dead as M'rashtra reels under floods

Red alert on; Local train services in Mumbai hit; School, colleges shut amid 200mm rains

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

Relentless rainfall has wreaked havoc across Maharashtra, claiming over 10 lives, displacing hundreds, and paralysing transport networks over the past two days. Several districts, including Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg, remain on high alert as authorities brace for further downpours.

Heavy rains battered Mumbai for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, flooding key roads and disrupting local train services — the city's lifeline. Several parts of the city, including Borivali, Andheri, Sion, Dadar, and Chembur, received over 200 mm of rain, with Vikhroli topping at 255.5 mm.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) ordered the closure of schools, colleges, and government offices, while the Bombay High Court shut operations by 12.30 pm. Mumbai Police urged residents to stay indoors unless necessary and appealed to private firms to implement work-from-home.

Train services were suspended on the harbour line between CSMT and Kurla, and on the main line between Kurla and Sion due to waterlogged tracks. The Mithi River, swollen after continuous downpours, forced the evacuation of 350 residents from Kurla.

Meanwhile, Rescuers in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district recovered the body of a woman on Tuesday, raising the death toll from the 14 August, cloudburst in Chisoti village to 64. The decomposed body was found downstream, while sniffer dogs also helped locate partial remains under debris.

People climb onto the roof of buses moving through a waterlogged road at Kurla in Mumbai *PHOTO: PTI*

20 died in rain-related incidents in Thane in 4 months

FLIGHTS DIVERTED AT MUMBAI SIRPORT

Heavy rainfall affected flight operations at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, with at least eight flights diverted to cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, and Hydera bad. Airlines including IndiGo and Air India warned of delays due to low visibility and urged passengers to check status updates before travelling.

NANDED: SEVEN SWEPT AWAY, 293 RESCUED

In Nanded, seven people were swept away in floodwaters early Tuesday. Local teams rescued three, while four remain missing. At least 293 residents from low-lying villages were evacuated, and the Indian Army has set up a medical camp for the flood-affected. The Lendi River overflowed after heavy rainfall, inund ating seve ral areas. A yellow alert remains in place.

GADCHIROLI: YOUTH MISSING

A 19-year-old man from Gadchiroli went missing after being swept away in an overflowing stream. Authorities closed two national highways, one state highway, and five roads due to flooding. An orange alert was issued for the district, with lighter rainfall expected in nearby areas, including Nagpur and Chandrapur.

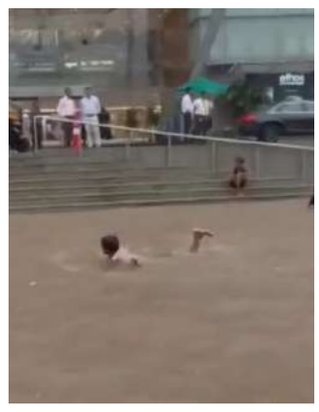
Heavy rainfall has filled 11 major irrigation projects in Marathwada to 90 per cent capacity. Controlled discharge from seven dams sent over 2.9 lakh cusecs into the Godavari River basin.

RED ALERT FOR KONKAN, GHATS

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for Mumbai, Konkan, and ghat regions of Madhya Maharashtra, warning of extremely heavy rainfall through Wednesday. *—PTI*

BRIDGES WASHED AWAY IN KULLU

Flash floods caused by an overnight cloudburst in Kanon village, Kullu district, washed away a bridge and three shops, officials reported on Tuesday. Continuous rains have triggered landslides, leading to the closure of all schools, colleges, and anganwadi centres in Kullu and Banjar sub-divisions to ensure student safety. In Shimla, around 40 people were evacuated after a massive landslide near Ramchandra Chowk. Heavy rains have disrupted 389 roads, 760 power transformers, and 186 water schemes across Himachal Pradesh. Since June 20, the state has suffered Rs 2,194 crore in losses, with 140 deaths and 37 missing due to floods and landslides.



A young boy swims on a flooded road outside a mall in Mumbai; Locals rescue two people stuck in a flooded car in Thane; Despite standing in knee-deep water, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday claimed there is no flood-like situation in the city and the Yamuna water level will recede in a few days *PHOTO: PTI/SCREENGRABS*

MANIPUR VIOLENCE TAPES

SC raps CFSL for 'misdirected' test on Biren's audio

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the Central Forensic Science Laboratory's (CFSL) examination of audio recordings alleging former Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh's involvement in ethnic violence in the state, terming the exercise "misdirected."

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and Satish Chandra Sharma clarified that it had only asked for voice sample verification, not the authenticity of the audio clips. "We want to know if the voice in the clip matches the admitted voice of the individual," the court said, adding the CFSL appeared confused and was focusing incorrectly on verifying video authenticity.

The court also rejected an application from Singh's daughter seeking to join the case, stating it was not a "family support programme." Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHUR), demanded an independent SIT probe, raising concerns over government control of the CFSL.

The bench responded that administrative control did not imply bias but suggested involving an external agency if necessary. The matter was adjourned to August 25.

The case relates to audio clips allegedly implicating Singh in instigating and orchestrating violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities that began in May 2023, resulting in over 260 deaths and thousands displaced. Bhushan described the recordings as "very serious," alleging Singh encouraged violence and protected perpetrators.

Singh resigned as chief minster in February amid political turmoil. The court continues to scrutinise the authenticity of the leaked clips as part of its ongoing investigation. *—PTI*

Is it crime to love: SC flays NCPCR for challenging Muslim couple's protection

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

he Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) challenging a 2022 Punjab and Haryana High Court order that upheld the marriage of a 16-year-old Muslim girl and granted protection to the couple and their child.

The High Court had ruled that under Muslim personal law, a girl who has attained puberty or is over 15 can legally marry, despite the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act setting 18 as the minimum age. The couple, Javed and Ashiana, were granted protection of life and liberty.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan came down heavily on NCPCR, questioning its locus. "You have no locus... how can you challenge protection granted to a minor? The girl is living with her husband and has a child. What is your problem?" Justice Nagarathna asked.

When NCPCR argued for a wider legal debate, the court declined, stating the case was only about protection.

Dismissing three similar petitions, the court warned against conflating consensual teenage relationships with criminal offences. "Is it criminal to love?" Justice Nagarathna asked, adding, "Don't misuse POCSO to criminalise romantic cases — that's how honour killings happen." —PTI

Amoebic encephalitis death: Amoeba found in well water

KOZHIKODE, 19 AUG

An amoeba was found in the well water at the residence of a nine-year-old girl who died last week due to amoebic encephalitis here, health officials said on Tuesday. Amoebic encephalitis is a rare brain infection.

A senior health official of the Kerala district said a fever survey was carried out among all those who used the water from the well. Following the survey, the deceased girl's brother is presently under observation as he had a fever. However, he has not shown any other symptoms associated with the brain infection,

caused by a free-living amoeba found in contaminated waters, the official said.

The girl, a resident of Thamarassery here, was admitted to a hospital due to fever on 13 August, but as her condition worsened quickly, she was shifted to the Kozhikode medical college on 14 August where she died the same day.

A test carried out at the microbiology lab of the medical college revealed on 15 August that the cause of her death was amoebic encephalitis. It was probably the fourth case of the rare brain infection reported from the district this year.

Caused by free-living amoeba, amoebic encephalitis is a deadly infection that is contracted from freshwater sources such as lakes, rivers, and streams. *—PTI*

Veteran actor Achyut Potdar dies at 90

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

Actor Achyut Potdar, best known for his roles in TV shows and films like 'Bharat Ek Khoj', 'Pradhan Mantri, '3 Idiots', died at a hospital here due to heart related issues. He was 90.

Potdar was admitted to Jupiter Hospital around 4 pm on Monday and was declared dead at 10.30pm.

Potdar played supporting roles in many films and TV shows such as 'Tezaab', 'Parineeta', 'Aandolan', 'Wagle Ki Duniya', 'Dabangg 2', and 'Ferrari Ki Sawaari'.

His brief appearance of a professor in Rajkumar Hirani's '3 Idiots' (2019), and his dialogue 'Kehna Kya Chahte Ho' became one of the fan favourite moments from the Aamir Khan-starrer movie and has been recreated in pop culture time and again through memes. *—PTI*

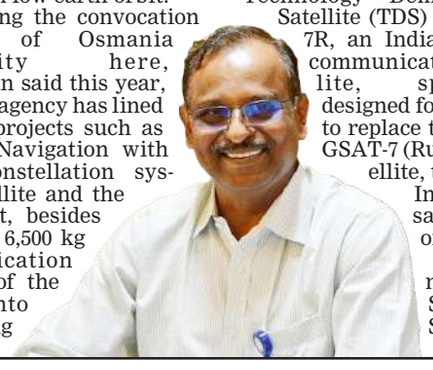
INDIA'S SPACE RACE

ISRO building 40-storey-tall rocket to place 75T payload in space

HYDERABAD, 19 AUG

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan on Tuesday said the space agency has been working on a rocket as high as a 40-storey building to place a 75,000 kg payload in low earth orbit.

Delivering the convocation address of Osmania University here, Narayanan said this year, the space agency has lined up with projects such as NAVIC (Navigation with India Constellation system) satellite and the N1 rocket, besides placing a 6,500 kg communication satellite of the USA into orbit using Indian rockets.



He said by 2035, a 52-tonne mass space station is going to be built even as ISRO is working on the Venus Orbiter mission.

ISRO has planned to launch Technology Demonstration Satellite (TDS) and GSAT-7R, an Indian military communication satellite, specifically designed for the Navy, to replace the existing GSAT-7 (Rukmini) satellite, this year.

India has 55 satellites in orbit now.

On astronaut Subhashnu Shukla's journey to the International Space Station, he said a day before launch, a team led by him identified a leakage in the rocket and the trip was postponed to 25 June. "If the rocket would have taken off, it would have been a catastrophic failure," he said.

Asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting that India needs to build a pool of 40-50 astronauts ready to lead future space missions, Narayanan said, "In the future it will happen."

India plans to undertake its first human spaceflight in 2027 and build its own space station by 2035.

India also has plans to land its own astronaut on the moon by 2040. *—PTI*

Civets turn Kerala court into washroom, proceeding stalled

KOCHI, 19 AUG

Proceedings in the Kerala High Court were temporarily halted on Tuesday after civets caused an "unbearable stench" in the courtroom of Chief Justice Nitin Jamdar. The animals had taken refuge in the false ceiling and urinated there, court officials confirmed.

The division bench of Chief Justice Jamdar and Justice Basant Balaji quickly dealt with urgent and fresh matters on the day's list before adjourning the rest. The courtroom was then closed around 11.30am for cleaning.

A senior government pleader said the foul odour had lingered for several days, but since Monday afternoon it had become intolerable. "This morning also the smell was very bad, so proceedings had to be curtailed," he explained.

Traps had been set earlier to capture the civets, and one was caught on Tuesday morning. It is yet to be decided when hearings will resume. *—PTI*

PHOTO: Supriya Dutta

GAZA STARVES IN SILENCE

Parachutes drop supplies into Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. At least 266 people, including 122 children, have died in Gaza due to starvation inflicted by Israel. Starting March, Israel fully sealed Gaza's crossings, preventing food, water, and humanitarian aid from entering. Children here go to sleep hungry, their cries drowned out by silence the world chooses to keep ***PHOTO: PTI***

Trump talks advanced Kremlin agenda

The current phase of the war in Ukraine continues unabated into its fourth year, with grinding offences and strikes against civilian infrastructure increasingly the norm.

For Ukraine, it is arguably the most vulnerable that it has been since 2022.

These developments have prompted calls among world leaders to end the conflict. On the surface, United States President Donald Trump's meetings with both the Ukrainian and Russian leaders suggest a balanced approach. In reality, however, Trump's actions primarily benefit Russia.

While Trump and Putin may have hit it off, they failed to address the underlying reason for the meeting: Russia's invasion of Ukraine ***PHOTO:X/WHITEHOUSE***

The Alaska summit

After the recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, Trump declared that their summit had been "very useful". He declared the meeting "a 10 (out of 10) in the sense we got along great."

While Trump and Putin may have hit it off, the issue with such an assessment is that it failed to address the underlying reason for the meeting: Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The meeting was far more useful for Putin and Russia than Ukraine and its allies.

Putin managed to stoke tensions, and potentially divisions, among Ukraine's principal supporters by not including Ukraine in the summit. No other countries participated in the summit.

This caused considerable consternation in Ukraine, where it was feared that Trump would make an agreement without Ukrainian consent, as well as in Europe, where Russian aggression and revisionism is a more direct threat.

Ceasefire demand evaporated

Putin managed to get a major concession as Trump renounced his own recent calls for a ceasefire.

For Ukraine and its allies, achieving a ceasefire was a fundamental requirement for any peace negotiations. Lastly, the very nature of the Alaska meeting itself helped legitimise Russia in international opinion.

Since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia has courted international opinion.

It's been more successful than most people in Europe and North America realise as significant portions of Asia, Africa and Latin America remain ambivalent or even support Russia.

Nonetheless, Russia was always restrained by the condemnation it received from multiple international organisations, most notably the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.

Trump welcoming Putin on American soil, when the Russian leader is under what amounts to a de facto travel ban by the International Criminal Court, undermines these institutions' condemnations.

Zelenskyy's visit to Washington

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy promptly arranged a White House meeting with Trump in the aftermath of the Alaskan summit. And he didn't arrive alone: European leaders accompanied him to show solidarity.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio insisted the European leaders weren't on hand to prevent Trump from bullying Zelenskyy, as occurred during their last Oval Office meeting.

That's probably only partly true. Several European leaders — ranging from the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to French President Emmanuel Macron — almost assuredly accompanied Zelenskyy to prevent Trump from forcing the Ukrainian leader into concessions that are detrimental to their interests as well.

Trump's pre-meeting social media post undoubtedly heightened their concerns. In the post, he placed the burden of peace on Zelenskyy and argued that Ukraine must accept the loss of Crimea and never accede to NATO.

Carefully orchestrated

Ukrainian officials sought to carefully orchestrate Zelenskyy's one-on-one Oval Office meeting with Trump. Zelenskyy wore a suit and delivered a letter from the Ukrainian first lady to Melania Trump.

Notably, Trump did not rule out a role for American soldiers in helping to maintain peace in Ukraine. Outside observers believe an American presence in Ukraine to maintain any eventual peace is a fundamental requirement.

Hope versus reality

Any direct American involvement in Ukraine would also undermine his support among his political base. One of Trump's key campaign promises was not to involve the US in "endless foreign wars."

A move by Trump to deploy American soldiers to Ukraine would be politically tenuous, as fractures are already emerging among his political base over his handling of the Jeffrey Epstein files.

Trump's cordial meetings with Zelenskyy and European leaders may fuel hope among Ukraine's supporters in the coming days. But any optimism should be tempered by the damage done by Trump's meeting with Putin.

Trump's unwillingness to make firm commitments at the meetings with Zelenskyy and European leaders means that Russia, on the balance, has succeeded in advancing its interests to the detriment of Ukraine and the prospects for a long-term, sustainable peace. *–PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Schools need fixing, not neurodivergent kids

The start of the school year brings excitement and new routines. But for many neurodiverse children, it also marks the return of being misunderstood.

Parents may notice their child struggling with transitions, overstimulated by noisy classrooms or labelled "disruptive" after a few days. Educators, meanwhile, may not be equipped to interpret behaviours that fall outside the expected norms.

For many neurodiverse children — those with autism, ADHD, sensory processing differences or other cognitive variations — these misunderstandings can lead to missed supports, exclusionary practices and long-term inequities in education and life outcomes.

When systems fail to understand and accommodate neurod ivergent individuals early on, these challenges often persist into adulthood, affecting quality of life and social inclusion.

School-related distress

School transitions can be stressful for neurodivergent students when environments emphasise rigid behavioural norms and overlook diverse ways of learning. Emerging research suggests that these challenges often begin in the early years and continue to shape students' educational pathways.

Research also shows students with Autism Spectrum Disorder experience school transitions as periods of heightened stress because of changes in relationships, routines and expectations, primarily when individual needs are not adequately supported.

Without adequate training in neurodiversity, many educators feel unprepared and rely heavily on diagnoses to guide support. When educators aren't prepared, this can result in exclusionary teaching practices, and missed supports and long-term inequities for students.

School-related distress is overwhelmingly concen trated among neurodivergent students, and it's often linked to environments that are inflexible or unresponsive to their needs.

These systemic gaps contribute to the growing school attendance crisis and underscore the need for more inclusive, neuroaffirming educational practices.

Often, educational settings focus on changing the child rather than adapting the system. School systems must shift away from deficit-based approaches, which regard neurodivergent children in terms of what they lack. These approaches overlook systemic barriers, blame students for their challenges and overlook their strengths.

Instead, school systems should focus on transforming the learning environment itself. A neuro-inclusive model reframes behaviours not as problems within the child but as a sign the school environment may not be supportive of their needs.

This perspective prioritises belonging, flexibility and universal support, starting with how we design classrooms, not how we label children.

Neurodiversity is not a problem to fix

Rather than seeing neurodivergence as a problem to diagnose, educators should approach it as a difference to under stand. Neurodiversity, first popularised by autistic advocates in the 1990s, recognises that neurological differences are part of natural human variation.

From this lens, behaviours such as fidgeting, stimming or requiring extra transition time are seen as expressions of self-regulation and cognitive needs. A recent educational psychology article reframes stimming as a bodily practice that supports focus and emotional processing in environments designed for neurotypical norms.

Inclusion should not depend on labels; it should be a proactive strategy. Designing classrooms for cognitive and sensory differences from the start ensures all children, especially those from racialised and underserved communities, feel like they belong and can thrive.

What educators and families can do

Creating inclusive classrooms doesn't require waiting for a diagnosis, it requires a mindset shift. Frameworks like universal design for learning (UDL) offer educators multiple ways for children to engage, express themselves and participate. In early years settings, this might look like:

-- visual schedules and picture cues to support transitions;

-- flexible seating, movement breaks or calming corners;

-- storybooks and materials that reflect neurodiversity as part of everyday life;

-- observing strengths before jumping in to "fix" perceived deficits.

Research supports these approaches. An inclusive preschool study found that using UDL strategies such as choice-making, varied materials, flexible seating and multimodal activities, led to better skill development, emotional regulation and engagement in both diagnosed and undiagnosed children.

Is the school ready for this child?

Educators must shift from asking "is this child ready for school?" to "is the school ready for this child?" This reframing challenges deficit-based notions of readiness and calls for schools to adapt their environments, practices and mindsets to welcome all learners equitably.

This change means educators must slow down, listen to behaviours and remember that all children communicate differently. It also means school boards, education ministries and provincial governments need to give educators the tools, time and training to recognise neurodiverse learners with care.

When support is no longer conditional on a formal diagnosis or a child being regarded as having exceptional needs, schools open the door to educational equity. When neurodiverse children are seen and valued from the start, rather than excluded or expected to be fixed, they are more likely to thrive.

Every child deserves to feel like school is a place for them. *– PTI*

LETTERS

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Fading palms: Kerala struggles to hold on to its coconut heritage

TH'PURAM, 19 AUG

Kerala, whose very name means the land of coconut trees, is slowly losing its identity as coconut groves thin out and yields fall.

Once so common that they shaped daily life, coconuts and coconut oil have now become costly essentials, with coconuts recently selling for over Rs 85 a kilo and oil nearing Rs 600 a litre.

For many families, the soaring prices cut deep, altering kitchens and traditions in a state long known as God's Own Country.

Global demand for coconuts has surged as people discovered the health benefits of lauric acid. Coconut oil is unusually rich in this fatty acid, with nearly half its content made up of lauric acid -- a compound also present in human breast milk, according to agriculture scientists here.

But in Kerala, shrinking farmland, rising real estate prices, crop diseases and climate change have combined with lower yields to push the state's coconut production into steady decline.

It is not just coconuts and coconut oil that are in demand; the coconut shell now fetches a good price as its charcoal is highly sought after, while coir pith made from the husk is widely used in agriculture and gardening.

A huge gap remains between demand and supply, even as neighbouring states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh step in with better-managed, more scientific coconut farms that deliver higher yields, pushing up the prices of both the nuts and the oil.

"Climate has been playing a major role in the spread of resilient new pests and diseases such as root wilt. We now face shorter but heavier spells of rain, warmer nights and heatwaves. Added to this is the lack of care for existing coconut trees," NV Radhakrishnan, professor and head of the Department of Plant Pathology at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, told PTI.

He said Kerala no longer has scientifically managed coconut farms, and the coconut has become a homestead crop.

"In Andhra and Tamil Nadu, they grow coconut as a monocrop, whereas in Kerala we have mixed farms, with coconuts being just one among several crops. It has also become a homestead crop, with each household having only a few trees within its compound," Radhakrishnan said.

Experts say that Kerala people no longer care for their coconut trees and rarely practise proper, scientific manuring. The rapid loss of traditional knowledge once held by

The new generation Keralites are not too keen on tradition coconut farms; There is severe shortage of skilled coconut tree climbers, who would earlier identify diseases and pest attacks in the trees ***PHOTOS: KERALA TOURISM/ PTI***

coconut tree climbers in the state is also a major reason for the faster spread of diseases and declining production.

"We have a serious shortage of skilled coconut tree climbers in Kerala. In earlier times, it was these climbers who, after plucking the coconuts, would also clean the crown of the tree. This was essential to identify diseases and pest attacks at an early stage and help the farmer address them before they worsen," T Santhosh Kumar, Assistant Professor and Head of the Coconut Research Centre, Balaramapuram, said.

Now, most coconut plucking in Kerala is done by labourers from states such as West Bengal, Assam, Odisha and Bihar.

He was quick to add, however, that the main reason for the decline in coconut production in Kerala is the huge demand for land for housing and commercial purposes, with several coconut trees regularly being cut down to make way for residential or commercial buildings.

"Whatever produce we are getting today comes from trees planted by earlier generations. None from the younger generation are planting coconut trees, and most areas in Kerala have now reached the stage where replanting is needed, with trees over 70 years old," Kumar added.

Earlier, Kerala had local traders who procured coconuts directly from farmers, converted them into copra and sold them to mills and larger merchants. Now, such traders no longer exist, and farmers mostly sell raw coconuts directly to mills or shops.

"We do not have such intermediaries now, and we procure coconuts directly from the field for our mill. But most of our supply comes from Tamil Nadu, as procurement from Kerala has been steadily declining over the years," said Hariharan, owner of Sriram Oil Mill in Poojappura and Vilappilsala, who has been in the business for over 40 years.

He said there are no organised coconut farms in Kerala, and the availability of nuts has declined over the years. Even the supply from neighbouring states has been dwindling in recent months.

Kumar said that Kerala people do not provide enough care for the trees to improve yield and rarely follow scientifically proven manuring methods.

Radhakrishnan also raised the same concern. "When coconut and allied products fetch good prices, we now see more people coming forward to plant coconut trees, and we are receiving many inquiries," Kumar said.

In Kerala, coconut and coconut oil are essential commodities in daily life. With supplies falling and prices rising, Keralites are cutting back on their use and, with great reluctance, shifting to other, less healthy oils."I now mix a portion of palm oil with coconut oil when cooking, as I cannot afford the higher prices of coconut oil," said Indu, a housewife. Bindu, a salesperson at a coconut and coconut oil firm, said that people are exploring other options because they cannot afford the rising rates. "Those who used to buy one or two kilos of oil are now settling for 500 grams or even 250 grams. Sales are going down as people hold back from spending more," she said. *–PTI*

Zelenskyy readies security guarantees

Trump starts prep for a bilateral Zelenskky-Putin meet, followed by a trilateral with him

WASHINGTON, 19 AUG

After a high stakes meeting with US President Donald Trump and European leaders, Ukrainian President Volodomyr Zelenskyy said that Kyiv is working on "concrete security guarantees".

Trump had met Zelenskyy and then Zelenskyy with several of Europe's biggest leaders at the White House on Monday, following his Friday meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Trump called Putin again on Monday when the European leaders were in the White House.

"I called Putin, and began the arrangements for a meeting, at a location to be determined, between Putin and Zelenskyy," Trump said on Truth Social. "After that meeting takes place, we will have a (trilateral), which would be the two Presidents, plus myself. Again, this was a very good, early step for a War that has been going on for almost four years."

Trump said that a potential ceasefire and teritorial boundaries should be hashed out during a face-to-face meeting between the warring countries' two leaders.

Zelenskyy told reporters following the White House meeting that if Russia does "not demonstrate a will to meet, then we will ask the United States to act accordingly."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that the first meeting is expected in two weeks.

"We don't know whether the Russian President will have the courage to attend such a summit. Therefore, persuasion is needed," Merz remarked.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, later added in an appearance on Fox News that "if Russia is not playing ball" on direct talks with Ukraine "the United States plus Europe will do more when it comes to tariffs and sanctions" on Moscow.

Trump also announced on Monday he would back European security guarantees for Ukraine.

Putin accepted this, he said.

However, Trump stopped short of committing U.S. troops to a collective effort to bolster Ukraine's security. He said instead that there would be a "NATO-like" security presence and that all those details would be hashed out with EU leaders.

After the meet, Zelenskyy wrote on X that, "We are already working on the concrete content of the security guarantees. Today, we continue coordination at the level of leaders.... National security advisors are also in constant contact now. There will be security guarantees. I thank all our partners for their determination and support."

Trump wrote on Truth Social that the Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, will be coordinating with Russia and Ukraine.

At the start of Monday's meeting, Zelenskyy presented a letter from his wife, Olena Zelenska, for Trump's wife, Melania. Trump during the Alaska summit had hand-delivered a letter to Putin from the US First Lady urging him to consider the children impacted by the conflict.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also thanked Trump breaking three years of deadlock.

"It is an important day and a new phase after three years of no sign from the Russian side of any willingness for a dialogue. Something is changing, something has changed, thanks to you," she said.

European leaders during the Monday meeting with US President Donald Trump at the Oval Office in the White House **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump goes gaga over Zelenskyy's 'fabulous' suit

A few months after Zelenskyy was grilled for not wearing a suit to his Oval Office meeting with Trump and Vice President JD Vance, he donned a blazer for Monday's meet. The journalist who questioned Zelenskyy last time thanked him for wearing a suit, saying "You look fabulous".

"I said the same thing" Trump said, adding that Glenn was the one attacked Zelenskyy.

"I remember," Zelenskyy replied. "But you are in the same suit. I've changed, and you have not."

TRUMP UNSURE IF PUTIN WILL MAKE A DEAL

In a morning interview with Fox News on Tuesday, Trump seemed unsure about whether Putin would strike a deal.

"We're going to find out about Putin in the next couple of weeks ... It's possible that he doesn't want to make a deal," Trump said. He warned that Putin would face a "rough situation" if no deal was made.

"I hope Putin is going to be good, and if he's not, it's going to be a rough situation," he remarked.

He also doubled down on his claim that Ukraine should be willing to let go of some territory. "I hope that ... Zelenskyy will do what he has to do. He has to show some flexibility also," Trump said.

Trump ruled out deploying any American soldiers to fight in Ukraine. "You have my assurance, and I'm President." —*PTI*

Trump gave the European leaders a tour of the White House. Amid the war summit, he took some time off to show them his collection of MAGA caps, including one which read '4 More Years' **PHOTO: X**

Putin wants to end the war for me, says Trump

Trump was caught on an open mic telling French President Emmanuel Macron that Putin – whom he met in Alaska days earlier – wants to strike a Ukraine peace deal "for me." I think he [Russian President Vladimir Putin] wants to make a deal," Trump told Macron. "I think he wants to make a deal for me, you understand that? As crazy as it sounds."

Ukraine to buy $90B worth US weapons

Zelenskyy confirmed plans for Ukraine to purchase USD 90 billion worth of American weapons through European funding as part of its security guarantees. Ukraine would also manufacture drones, some of which would be purchased by the US, Zelenskyy added, noting that a formal agreement would be over the next week or 10 days.

Trump pauses meeting to call Putin

Trump paused his meeting with Zelenskyy and European leaders to call Putin. Putin's foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov said that during the roughly 40-minute call, Trump briefed his Russian counterpart on his meeting with the European leaders.
Trump said he set up the Zelenskyy-Putin meet during the call.

National Guards to double for Trump's DC takeover

WASHINGTON, 19 AUG

The number of National Guard troops patrolling Washington, DC, is set to more than double in the coming days after Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, and West Virginia committed personnel to support US President Trump's federal takeover of the city. Currently, roughly 800 DC National Guard troops are deployed in the capital. They will be joined by about 200 personnel from Mississippi, between 300 and 400 from West Virginia, 150 from Ohio, and 200 from South Carolina, beefing up a presence that has largely remained idle around low-crime, tourist-heavy areas in the city. Coupled with reports that some guard members may soon be armed, a reversal of their initial orders, the deployments mark a major escalation. —*ANI*

Air Canada resumes talks with striking union

TORONTO, 19 AUG

Air Canada and the union representing 10,000 flight attendants resumed negotiations late on Monday after a strike commenced over the weekend, affecting around 130,000 travellers daily at the peak summer season. Despite the Canada Industrial Relations Board declaring the strike illegal, union president Mark Hancock stated, "We will not be returning to the skies," defying a second return-to-work order. Prime Minister Mark Carney urged both parties to resolve the situation swiftly, emphasising fair compensation for flight attendants. Air Canada cancelled at least 1,219 domestic and 1,339 international flights, with 500,000 customers impacted. The dispute centres around pay and unpaid work when planes are grounded. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Norwegian Crown Princess's son charged with rape

OSLO, 19 AUG

Marius Borg Hoiby, 28, the son of Norway's Crown Princess Mette-Marit, has been charged with raping four women, alongside domestic violence and assault, following a year-long police investigation. Hoiby, stepson of Crown Prince Haakon, is set to stand trial early next year, potentially facing up to 10 years in prison if convicted of the most serious charges. His lawyer, Petar Sekulic, stated, "He does not agree with the claims regarding rape and domestic violence," although Hoiby plans to plead guilty to lesser charges. He has been charged with 32 offences, including filming some of the incidents. The prosecution said Hoiby would not receive preferential treatment. The trial is expected to start in mid-January and last six weeks. —*Agencies*

Three killed in NYC bar shooting, two suspects at large

NEW YORK, 19 AUG

A bar shooting in Brooklyn has left three dead, including two of the shooters involved in the incident. According to Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, Jamel Childs, 35, and Marvin St. Louis, 19, were involved in an argument captured on surveillance footage at the Taste of the City Lounge shortly before 3.30am on Sunday. Approximately ten minutes later, St. Louis opened fire on Childs, prompting Childs and two others to retaliate. Both Childs and St. Louis were pronounced dead at the hospital, while 27-year-old bystander Amadou Diallo was declared dead at the scene. Commissioner Tisch noted that the shooting appears to be gang-related, with Childs connected to the Folk Nation gang, known for six shootings this year. —*PTI*

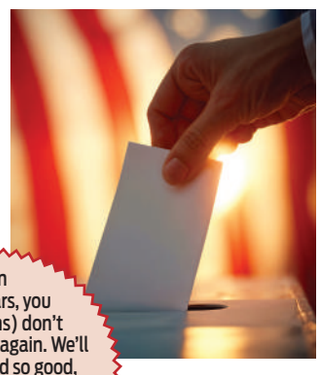
Trump vows to change how elections are run

WASHINGTON, 18 AUG

US President Donald Trump vowed more changes to the way elections are conducted in the US. Trump pledged on his Truth Social that he would do away with both mail voting —used by about one-third of all voters — and voting machines — some form of which are used in almost all of the country's thousands of election jurisdictions.

He has issued a wide-ranging executive order earlier this year that, among other changes, would have required documented proof-of-citizenship before registering to vote. His Monday post promised another election executive order to "help bring HONESTY to the 2026 Midterm elections."

Trump's post came after he told Fox News that Russian President Vladimir Putin, in their Friday meeting in Alaska, echoed his grievances about mail voting and the 2020 election. Trump continued his attack on mail voting and voting machines in the Oval Office during a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.



"In four years, you (Christians) don't have to vote again. We'll have it fixed so good, you're not gonna have to vote"
Donald Trump on 27 July, 2024

Trump remarked that he might not have to hold an election in 2028 if the US is at war – a jibe at Zelenskyy not being able to hold an election due to Russia's full-scale invasion.

"That's good," Trump said.

Trump's post also claimed that states "are merely an agent' for the Federal Government in counting and tabulating the votes" and must do what the federal government "as represented by the President" tells them to do.

Election lawyers said that's a misrepresentation of the US Constitution. It also flies in the face of what a core Republican Party value of prioritising states' rights. —*PTI*

Qatar waits for Israel's response after Hamas okays deal

JERUSALEM, 19 AUG

A key mediator on Tuesday stressed the urgency of brokering a ceasefire in Gaza after Hamas showed a "positive response" to a proposal, but Israel has yet to weigh in as its military prepares an offensive on some of the territory's most populated areas.

"If this (ceasefire) proposal fails, the crisis will exacerbate," Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for Qatar's Foreign Ministry, said, adding they have yet to hear from Israel on it.

Qatar is among the countries mediating to end the war. Al-Ansari said Hamas had agreed to the terms under discussion. He declined to provide details but said the proposal was "almost identical" to one previously advanced by US envoy Steve Witkoff, who is set to rejoin talks.

An Israeli official on Monday said the country's positions had not changed. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said a final push is needed to "complete the defeat of Hamas". —*PTI*

Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis, in the Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

383 AID WORKERS (a record) were killed in 2024, nearly half of them in Gaza: UN

28 PALESTINIANS were killed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip on Tuesday.

Kim slams S Korea-US military drills

SEOUL, 19 AUG

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un condemned the South Korean-US military drills and vowed a rapid expansion of his nuclear forces to counter rivals, state media said Tuesday, as he inspected his most advanced warship fitted with nuclear-capable systems.

South Korean and US militaries had kicked off their annual large-scale summertime exercise, the 11-day Ulchi Freedom Shield to bolster readiness against North Korea. The exercise will mobilise 21,000 troops, including 18,000 South Koreans, for computer-simulated command post operations and field training.

Kim said the drills show hostility and a "will to ignite a war," as he visited port Nampo on Monday and inspected warship Choe Hyon, a 5,000-tonne-class destroyer first unveiled in April.

The exercises have grown more provocative than before by incorporating a "nuclear element," requiring the North to respond with "proactive and overwhelming" countermeasures, he said. "The security environment is getting more serious day by day and the prevailing situation requires us to make a radical and swift change in the existing military theory and practice and rapid expansion of nuclearisation." —*PTI*

UK TO DROP 'BACK DOOR' MANDATE FOR APPLE

LONDON, 19 AUG

Apple will not be required to give the United Kingdom government access to encrypted data of American citizens, US intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard said.

Gabbard confirmed that the UK has dropped its request for Apple to create a "back door" that would have allowed access to US user data. The UK government said it maintains long-standing intelligence arrangements with Washington that include measures to protect privacy.

Apple did not comment.

In February, Apple said it would no longer offer its Advanced Data Protection feature in the UK after the Washington Post reported that British security officials had ordered the company to provide broad access to iCloud data.

The UK's Investigatory Powers Act allows authorities to issue "technical capability notices" requiring companies to weaken or remove encryption. Apple and other technology companies use end-to-end encryption, which prevents data from being read by third parties, including law enforcement and the companies themselves. —*Agencies*

FIRST TIME IN 30 YEARS

Docs and CDC differ on Covid advice for kids

NEW YORK, 19 AUG

For the first time in 30 years, the American Academy of Paediatrics is substantially diverging from US government vaccine recommendations.

The group's new Covid-19 recommendations — released Tuesday — come as vaccine sceptics have come into power in the new Trump administration.

They aren't going to help, acknowledged Dr. James Campbell, Vice Chair of the AAP Infectious Disease Committee.

"We need to make the right choices for children to protect them," he said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The AAP is strongly recommending Covid-19 shots for children ages 6 months to 2 years. Shots are also advised for older children.

That differs from guidance established under US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, which doesn't recommend the shots for healthy children of any age but says kids may get the shots in consultation with physicians.

There have been a few small differences between AAP and the government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.

For example, the AAP has advised that children get HPV vaccinations starting at age 9; the CDC said that's OK but has emphasised vaccinations at ages 11 and 12.

But in 30 years, this is the first time the recommendations have differed "in a significant or substantial way," Campbell said. —*PTI*

Two elderly Sikh men assaulted in UK, three held

LONDON, 19 AUG

A shocking video of two elderly Sikh men being assaulted outside Wolverhampton Railway Station has resulted in the arrest of three men, as British Transport Police (BTP) confirmed that the incident, which occurred on 15 August, is being treated as a racially-aggravated hate crime.

In the video, one victim is seen on the ground, his turban discarded, while another is kicked and punched. A bystander, recording the incident, says, "These two men have just gotten beaten up by these white men," before demanding, "What are you doing!" at the assailants.

The victims, both local taxi drivers, were hospitalised but later discharged. The suspects, aged 17, 19, and 25, were released on bail pending further inquiries.

Sikh leaders, including Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal, condemned the attack. "This racist hate crime targets the Sikh community," he stated on X.

Congress's Punjab unit president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring labelled the assault as a "disturbing setback for inter-community harmony". —*Agencies*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Gold falls by ₹500 to ₹1,00,420/10g

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Gold prices fell Rs 500 to Rs 1,00,420 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday amid a firm trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 1,00,920 per 10g in the previous market session. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity dipped Rs 450 to Rs 1,00,050 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. It had closed at Rs 1,00,500 per 10g on Monday. In addition, silver prices had settled at Rs 1,15,000 per kg in the previous market session. In international markets, spot gold went up 0.15 per cent to trade at USD 3,337.92 per ounce in New York. *—PTI*

Rupee up by 26P, closes at 87.13 against USD

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

The rupee appreciated 26 paise to close at 87.13 against the US dollar on Tuesday, supported by optimism over GST restructuring and positive domestic equity markets. Forex traders said rupee is expected to trade with a positive bias as easing worries over additional tariffs by the US boosted market sentiments after the meeting between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 87.24 against the US dollar, touched an intraday low of 87.31 and a high of 86.92, and settled at 87.13, registering a gain of 26 paise over its previous close. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was lower by 0.13 per cent at 98.04. *—PTI*

Delhi citizens can now buy land on Zepto

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Real estate developer House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL) has tied up with quick commerce platform Zepto to market its residential plots. Initially, premium plots in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh, and Neral, Maharashtra, will be listed on the Zepto app. HoABL already offers a digital platform for customers to explore, purchase and track plots. The Zepto collaboration enhances accessibility, allowing users to discover properties on a platform they use daily. According to HoABL's Chief Marketing Officer Saurabh Jain, the partnership will broaden the company's reach. Buyers connecting through Zepto will be linked within 10 minutes to an HoABL expert via video call. Founded in 2020, HoABL has sold 11Msq ft and is developing 30Msq ft across India. *—PTI*

MakeMyTrip begins hotel booking near national parks

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

MakeMyTrip, a travel booking platform listed on NASDAQ, has launched a new feature to ease the discovery and booking of hotels and homestays near over 100 national parks in India. Based in Gurugram, the company has utilised artificial intelligence (AI) to identify over 2,000 accommodations in proximity to these natural reserves. The platform offers a 'Tips' section, providing essential information such as operational hours, peak visitation times, entry protocols, and transport routes for each national park, aiding informed decision-making. "On our platform, searches for national parks have doubled over the past two years," noted Ankit Khanna, Chief Product Officer - Hotel, Growth & Emerging Businesses. "By streamlining the booking process, we hope to inspire more travellers to explore India's natural heritage." *—PTI*

Fitch warns of big strain on pharma over US tariffs

Fitch also sees a limited impact of US tariffs on Indian corps

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Pharmaceuticals, one of India's biggest export earners, could come under strain if the United States announces fresh tariffs, Fitch Ratings has warned in a new Fitch Wire report.

The rating agency said while Indian corporates generally have low direct exposure to current US tariffs, the pharmaceutical industry remains vulnerable to future trade measures. The US is a key market for Indian drugmakers, and any tariff imposition could ripple across the sector.

As per the report, Biocon Biologics Limited, which focuses on biosimilars, is particularly exposed with about 40 per cent of its revenue coming from the US. The company's products are mainly manufactured in India and Malaysia.

Automobiles and chemicals face risks too, though exposure remains limited compared with pharma PHOTO: FREEPIK

Fitch cautioned that significant US tariffs on pharmaceutical exports could hurt Biocon's performance, adding that passing higher costs to consumers might be difficult in a competitive market, even with steady demand for its medicines.

The warning comes after Washington imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods beginning 7 August, 2025, and an additional 25 per cent levy linked to imports of Russian oil effective August 27. These measures have already clouded prospects for several Indian industries.

Automobiles and chemicals face risks too, though exposure remains limited compared with pharma. Russian crude, which makes up 30-40 per cent of India's oil imports, continues to underpin the profitability of state-owned oil marketing companies. Fitch estimates a 10 per cent hit to their earnings in the event of a complete halt in Russian purchases, though government support would keep their credit ratings steady.

For now, Fitch assumes limited direct tariff impact on sectors like IT services, cement, telecoms, and utilities. But the report cautioned that if tariffs remain higher than in other Asian markets, India's projected 6.5 per cent growth for FY26 could come under pressure. *—ANI*

Cotton was so far subject to an 11 per cent import duty along with the Agriculture Infrastructure & Development Cess PHOTO: FREEPIK

Govt allows duty free import of cotton till 30 Sept

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The government has allowed duty-free import of raw cotton till 30 September to improve the availability of the key raw material for the textile sector, a move which is expected to help the US.

Cotton was so far subject to an 11 per cent import duty along with the Agriculture Infrastructure & Development Cess. According to a finance ministry notification dated 18 August, the duty exemption will take effect from 19 August and shall remain in force till 30 September.

The scrapping of the import duty is expected to ensure raw material availability at globally competitive rates for the textile sector. Domestically, the sector also faces duty inversion under GST regime.

The import duty relief by India comes at a time when Indian exporters, including the textile sector, face a steep 50 per cent duty in the US.

Cotton imports have surged 107.4 per cent, rising from USD 579.2 million in FY2024 to USD 1.20 billion in FY2025.

Major suppliers last year included Australia with USD 258.2 million, the US with USD 234.1 million, Brazil with USD 180.8 million, and Egypt with USD 116.3 million.

Additionally, the central government's step of reducing import duty on cotton will boost the textile industry of the country and will increase exports according to Praveen Khandelwal, BJP MP and Secretary General of Confederation of All India Traders.

In a major relief to the textile and garment industry, central government announced a complete waiver of customs duty and Agriculture Infrastructure & Development Cess on import of raw cotton. *—PTI/ANI*

Mkts rally for 4th day amid GST reforms

BSE Sensex jumped by 370.64 points while NSE Nifty climbed by 103.70 points PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

Rising for the fourth consecutive day, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Tuesday following gains in oil major Reliance Industries and Tata Motors amid prevailing optimism over sweeping GST reforms and easing geopolitical worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped by 370.64 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 81,644.39. During the day, it spurted by 482.13 points or 0.59 per cent to 81,755.88.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 103.70 points or 0.42 per cent to 24,980.65.

Optimism prevailed in market, buoyed by plans for big bang reforms in GST regime by Diwali and easing geopolitical worries, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Motors rose the most by 3.5 per cent while Adani Ports gained 3.16 per cent. Reliance Industries rose by 2.82 per cent. Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hindustan Unilever and Maruti were also among the gainers. However, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, Mahindra & Mahindra and HCL Tech were among the laggards. The BSE midcap and smallcap indices jumped 0.97 per cent each.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Oil & Gas climbed 1.49 per cent, followed by energy (1.48 per cent), auto (1.45 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.25 per cent), services (1.12 per cent) and telecommunication (1.04 per cent).

As many as 2,630 advanced while 1,437 declined and 165 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

'Nifty 50 may touch 28,000 due to GST rationalisation'

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Indian stock markets could see a major boost over the coming year as the government's move to rationalize Goods and Services Tax (GST) is expected to lift growth and sentiment. According to a report by Emkay Research, the Nifty 50 index could touch 28,000 by September 2026, with the brokerage firm upgrading its market outlook. The report described India's GST rationalisation as a "growth-accretive, big-ticket reform" and said it is a major market mover. Rationalisation of GST is expected to accelerate the formalisation of the Indian economy and improve the competitiveness of domestic companies. *—ANI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

RBI TO REISSUE GOVT SECURITIES WORTH RS 36,000 CRORE

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The Indian government has announced the re-issue of two government securities (G-Secs) amounting to Rs 36,000 crore through an auction scheduled for 22 August, 2025, to be conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The re-issuance will consist of Rs 6,000 crore of the 5.91 per cent Government Security (GS) maturing in 2028 and Rs 30,000 crore of the 6.33 per cent GS maturing in 2035. Additionally, the government retains the option to accept an extra subscription of up to Rs 2,000 crore for each security.

The auction will take place at the RBI's Mumbai office, with bids submitted electronically via the RBI Core Banking Solution (E-Kuber) system. Non-competitive bids can be placed between 10.30am and 11.00am, while competitive bids will be accepted from 10.30am to 11:30am on the same day.

The government has made provisions for non-competitive bidders, reserving up to five per cent of the total sale amount for this category. Results will be announced on the RBI's website, with successful bidders required to make payments on 25 August, 2025. *—ANI*

Centre disburses ₹21.6K cr under PLI schemes

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The government has allocated a substantial Rs 21,689 crore under Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across 12 sectors, including electronics and pharmaceuticals, since their inception to bolster domestic manufacturing, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In 2021, the government unveiled PLI schemes for 14 sectors with a total outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore. "Cumulative incentive amount of Rs 21,689 crore have been disbursed as on 31 July, 2025 under PLI schemes for 12 sectors," stated Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada in a written response to the Lok Sabha.

The sectors benefiting from the PLI schemes include large-scale electronics manufacturing, IT hardware, bulk drugs, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, telecom and networking products, food processing, white goods, drones, specialty steel, textile products, and automobiles and auto components.

Additionally, Prasada revealed that 806 applications have been approved thus far under the PLI initiatives across all 14 sectors.

The food products segment leads with 182 approved applications, followed by speciality steel with 109, auto with 95, textiles with 74, white goods with 66, and pharmaceuticals with 55. *—PTI*

Inox Wind sells Rs 175 cr stake

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Inox Wind Ltd, a prominent provider of wind energy solutions in India, has announced the sale of a Rs 175 crore stake in its EPC subsidiary, Inox Renewable Solutions Ltd (IRSL), to investors at a valuation of Rs 7,400 crore. The post-merger valuation recently received a 'no objection' from the stock exchanges, company statement said.

Inox Wind caters to Independent Power Producers (IPPs), utilities, public sector undertakings (PSUs), and corporate investors. As part of the USD 12 billion INOXGFL Group, which boasts a legacy of over nine decades, Inox Wind focuses primarily on chemicals and renewable energy. IWL operates as a fully integrated player in the wind energy market, with four manufacturing plants. *—PTI*

'MID-CAREER WORKERS DRIVING AI ADOPTION IN INDIA'

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

India's digital and workplace transformation is increasingly being led by mid-career professionals, many of whom are actively seeking fresh training to stay competitive, a new report has revealed.

According to the Work Ahead Report by global job site Indeed, 56 per cent of mid-career workers feel they require significantly more training to remain future-ready, compared with just 41 per cent of younger counterparts. Confidence is particularly strong among those aged 35–54, with nearly half (49 per cent) saying they feel prepared to navigate AI-driven workplaces, and outpacing workers aged 18–24.

PHOTO: AI

The survey, conducted by Census wide in May 2025, covered 3,001 workers and business leaders across 12 industries, including technology, retail, manufacturing, healthcare and travel. It found that 34% expect to use Generative AI frequently in the near future, while one in four anticipates the adoption of Agentic AI.

Indeed India's Head of Sales, Sashi Kumar, said mid-career professionals are driving this change, actively embracing AI upskilling as a "career accelerator" for better pay, promotions, and future roles. *—PTI*

CHEAPEST IN THE WORLD

'ChatGPT Go' plan now in India at Rs 399

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

OpenAI has announced ChatGPT Go, its new subscription plan priced at Rs 399 a month that packs in increased message limits, image generation and file uploads for users in India, a market ChatGPT counts as its second-largest and among the fastest growing.

The company also announced that all ChatGPT subscriptions can be paid through UPI, a move that will make it easier for users across India to access OpenAI's advanced AI tools.

ChatGPT Go offers users in India more access to popular features, including higher message limits, image generation, file uploads and memory, powered by GPT-5 with enhanced Indic language support. Compared to the free plan, ChatGPT Go would offer 10 times higher message limits, image generation, and file or image uploads with GPT-5. "ChatGPT Go is designed for people in India who want greater access to ChatGPT's advanced capabilities at a more affordable price," the release said.

The new plan is in addition to existing subscription tiers, including ChatGPT Plus (Rs 1,999 per month), which offers priority access, faster performance, and higher usage limits for heavy users.

For professionals and enterprises who need the highest scale, customisation, and access to the most advanced models, OpenAI has ChatGPT Pro (at Rs 19,900 per month).

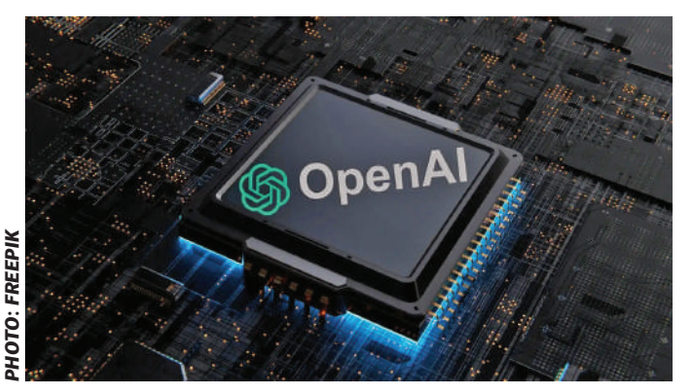


PHOTO: FREEPIK

India is ChatGPT's second-largest and one of its fastest-growing markets, with millions of users, including students, professionals, developers, entrepreneurs and creators.

Nick Turley, Vice President and Head of ChatGPT, said OpenAI has been inspired by how millions of people in India use ChatGPT daily for learning, work, creativity, and problem-solving. *—PTI*

BlueStone shares up by 6% on market debut

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Shares of BlueStone Jewellery and Lifestyle Ltd, which offers contemporary jewellery under its flagship brand 'BlueStone', on Tuesday ended with a premium of nearly 6 per cent against the issue price of Rs 517.

The stock started trading at Rs 508.80, down 1.58 per cent from the issue price on the BSE, later, it ended at Rs 546, up 5.60 per cent.

On the NSE, the stock listed at Rs 510, a discount of 1.35 per cent. The stock ended at Rs 546, a jump of 5.60 per cent.

The Rs 1,540.65-crore initial public offer (IPO) had a price band of Rs 492-517 per share.

Additionally, IPO of solar module maker Vikram Solar Ltd garnered 1.52 times subscription on the first day of bidding on Tuesday.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The initial share sale received bids for 6,88,40,280 shares against 4,53,61,650 shares on offer, according to data available with the NSE.

The Rs 2,079-crore IPO with a price band of Rs 315 to Rs 332 per share would conclude on 21 August. *—PTI*

GILL IS VICE-CAPTAIN, SHREYAS OUT OF ASIA CUP

Bumrah included in the squad that will be led by Suryakumar

MUMBAI, 19 AUG

Shubman Gill has been appointed vice-captain of India's T20 squad for next month's Asia Cup, while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah returns to bolster the bowling attack. However, IPL-winning captain Shreyas Iyer has missed out due to intense competition for spots.

Gill, 25, replaces Axar Patel as Suryakumar Yadav's deputy in the 15-member squad. His selection follows a stellar Test series against England, where he scored four centuries. India are in Group A alongside Pakistan, Oman, and UAE, with the tournament beginning on 9 September.

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar confirmed that Gill's form made his selection inevitable. However, Gill's batting position remains undecided, with Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson forming a successful opening pair. Agarkar hinted that Samson could be pushed to the middle order to accommodate Gill.

"Abhishek's performances make it hard to leave him out, plus he offers handy bowling. Shubman was already vice-captain after the last World Cup, so this isn't new," Agarkar said.

Bumrah, who last played a T20 during the 2024 World Cup, has been included despite concerns over his workload ahead of the West Indies Test series starting 2 October.

Agarkar noted there's no rigid plan but fast bowlers are being closely monitored.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav returns, while Jitesh Sharma is picked as the back-up wicketkeeper-batter. Skipper Suryakumar praised Jitesh's IPL form and consistency across formats.

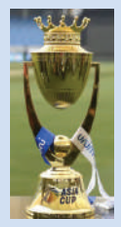
Yashasvi Jaiswal is among five standbys, joined by Prasidh Krishna, Washington Sundar, Riyan Parag, and Dhruv Jurel. Agarkar acknowledged Jaiswal's omission as unfortunate but credited Abhishek's top-order exploits.

Shreyas Iyer, despite strong IPL performances, was left out. Agarkar cited the wealth of T20 options as the reason. "Sometimes it's not easy to pick the final 15. But it's a good problem to have," he said. All-round duties will be shared by Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, and Shivam Dube. Washington Sundar narrowly missed out, with Agarkar noting that the balance of three spinners — Kuldeep, Varun Chakravarthy, and Axar— was preferred.

Agarkar emphasised this isn't the final squad for the T20 World Cup, and selections may change based on team needs and player form. The Asia Cup final is scheduled for 28 September in Dubai. —*PTI*

INDIA SQUAD FOR ASIA CUP

Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Shubman Gill (vice-captain), Abhishek Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Jitesh Sharma, Shivam Dube, Arshdeep Singh, Sanju Samson, Harshit Rana, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav.
Standbys: Prasidh Krishna, Washington Sundar, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Yashasvi Jaiswal.



Tanvi, Unnati to lead India in BWF Championship

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Fast-rising shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Unnati Hooda, along with boys' doubles pair of Bhargav Ram Arigela and Viswa Tej Gobburu, will lead a 25-member Indian squad at the BWF World Junior Championships to be held in Guwahati from 6 to 19 October. The Indian contingent also features Asian Junior Championships bronze medallist Vennala Kalagotla and Rakshitha Sree, making it one of the strongest Indian line-ups for the marquee junior event.

The Suhandinata Cup (mixed team championships) will be played from 6 t0 11 October, followed by the individual events from October 13 to 19 at the National Centre of Excellence. "We are very excited that India will be fielding one of its strongest contingents for the World Junior Championships on home turf," said Badminton Association of India Secretary Sanjay Mishra, in a release. —*PTI*

British tennis player Kyle Edmund to retire

LONDON, 19 AUG

Former British No. 1 tennis player Kyle Edmund announced his retirement from the sport at the age of 30. Edmund won two ATP titles and, in 2018, became only the second British man after Andy Murray to reach the semifinals of the Australian Open. He was part of the Britain team that won the Davis Cup for the first time in 79 years, and also represented his country at the 2016 Olympic Games.

Edmund's ascent into the world's top 50 corresponded with a knee injury that required three operations and kept him off the tour for almost two years. "The last five years have taken a toll with three surgeries and other injuries (and) my body is telling me it's finally reached the end point," Edmund said in a statement issued by the Lawn Tennis Association. —*AP*

National Sports Bill becomes an Act after Prez's nod

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

The National Sports Governance Bill has become an Act after President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the legislation that promises to overhaul India's sports administration.

The Presidential assent came on Monday, stated a Gazette notification by the central government.

"The following Act of Parliament received the assent of the President on the 18th August, 2025 and is hereby published for general information -- The National Sports Governance Act, 2025," the notification said. The legislation carries two major amendments to the bill that was originally presented in the Parliament.

The scope of Right to Information (RTI) has been narrowed to include only those sports bodies that rely on government funding and support, effectively keeping the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) out of its purview. The cricket board had been opposing coming under RTI as it is not dependent on government funding.

In addition, aspirants for the top positions in national federations will be required to serve just one term in the Executive Committee, instead of the "overly restrictive" eligibility rule of two terms prescribed earlier, to encourage "younger administrators and athlete-leaders".

The new law will lead to the creation of a National Sports Board, which will have the power to give affiliation to National Sports Federation and also de-recognise those who commit violations that may range from financial mis-appropriation to electoral wrongdoing.

A National Sports Tribunal will be instituted for speedy dispute resolution and its decisions would only be challengeable in the Supreme Court to ensure that sports issues are not tangled in lengthy legal proceedings.

The Sports Bill, which had been waiting in the wings for over a decade, was passed after extensive consultations by Mandaviya with various stakeholders over the past one year. —*PTI*

- The scope of Right to Information (RTI) has been narrowed to include only those sports bodies that rely on government funding and support.

Int'l soccer body 'concerned' over ISL tiff

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

International soccer players' union FIFPRO, on Tuesday, expressed concerns over the growing uncertainty in Indian club football and called for a swift resolution to the crisis that threatens the game's future in the country.

Club football "is going through crisis" due to the uncertainty over the future of the country's top-tier Indian Super League and the players body urged the stakeholders to put in a collective effort to tide over the crisis.

"FIFPRO Asia/Oceania is deeply concerned by the escalating uncertainty in Indian professional football and calls for a swift resolution," FIFPRO said in a statement.

Following the 11 July decision of ISL organisers FSDL (Football Sports development Limited) to put the 2025-26 season "on hold" due to the uncertainty surrounding the renewal of the MRA (Master Rights Agreement) signed with the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in 2010, three clubs have either paused first-team operations or suspended salaries of first-team players and staff.

"The Football Players Association of India (FPAI) and FIFPRO have been in constant contact with players across the ISL and have raised the matter with FIFA and the AFC on their behalf." The ISL clubs, last week, told the AIFF that it should take the matter to the Supreme Court.

The FIFPRO Asia/Oceania urged the AIFF, FSDL and club owners to work collaboratively with the FPAI to "confirm the ISL season schedule and establish a clear road map for the season to commence; and ensure clubs continue to meet contractual obligations to players." —*PTI*

B'DESH, KAZAKHSTAN REPLACE PAK, OMAN IN HOCKEY ASIA CUP

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Bangladesh and Kazakhstan have been confirmed as replacements for Pakistan and Oman in the men's Asia Cup hockey tournament, which is set to take place in Rajgir, Bihar, from 29 August.

According to the released schedule, hosts India are positioned in Pool A alongside China, Japan, and Kazakhstan, while Pool B features Malaysia, Korea, Chinese Taipei, and Bangladesh. The tournament will kick off on 29 August with an opening match between Malaysia and Bangladesh.

The final, along with the third-place match and classification games for 5th/6th places, is slated for 7th September.

Despite the Indian government offering to provide visas for the Pakistani players, the Pakistan Hockey Federation has opted not to participate, citing security concerns. —*PTI*

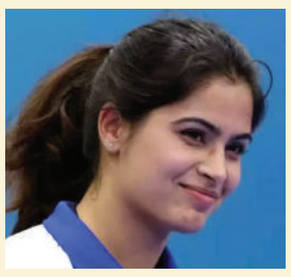
Manu's Bronze and Rashmika's Gold light up day for India

SHYMKENT, 19 AUG

India enjoyed a stellar day at the Asian Shooting Championship on Tuesday, with Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker clinching Bronze in the women's 10m air pistol event, while Rashmika Sahgal bagged gold in the junior women's category.

Bhaker scored 219.7 in the eight-woman final, finishing behind China's Qianke Ma (243.2) and Korea's Jiin Yang (241.6). Bhaker was in fifth after the opening series but climbed up with a sharp 10.5 on her 11th shot. A tight battle with Korea's Yang and Iran's Haniyeh Rostamiyan ensued, but Bhaker held firm to secure third place.

Earlier, Rashmika struck individual Gold in the junior women's 10m air pistol final with a score of 241.9, a full 4.3 points ahead of Korean Han Seunghyun. A 10.9 on her 15th shot sealed her dominance. Rashmika (582) also led India to team gold, alongside Vanshika Chaudhary (573) and Mohini Singh (565).



Bhaker (583) added a team bronze in the senior category, teaming up with Palak (573) and Suruchi Singh (574). Both Palak and Suruchi narrowly missed qualifying for the individual final.

India's medal tally grew with Kapil Bainsla previously winning junior gold, and the duo of Jonathan Gavin Antony (bronze, junior men's) and Girish Gupta (gold, youth men's) also contributing. Dev Pratap added a youth bronze. —*PTI*

Praggs outplays Gukesh at Sinquefield Cup

ST LOUIS, 19 AUG

In a stunning upset at the Sinquefield Cup Chess tournament, Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa triumphed over World Champion D Gukesh in the opening round, securing his position as the third-ranked player in live world chess rankings. This victory places him in a tie for the lead with the formidable Levon Aronian of the United States, who also claimed victory against Nodirbek Abdusattorov from Uzbekistan.

Praggnanandhaa faced Gukesh, who played Black, entering the game with the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Gukesh's early exchanges and questionable setup led him astray, as he spent excessive time on familiar positions. Praggnanandhaa, with the advantage of the Bishop pair, capitalised on Gukesh's missteps, ultimately winning a pawn and sealing the match in just 36 moves.

After the game, Praggnanandhaa remarked, "I don't really know what happened today. I think he was a bit off." His win also levelled their classical match record at three victories each. "Last year, I messed up some good positions against him... finally it's good to get a win," he added. In other first-round matches, Fabiano Caruana and Duda Jan-Kryzstof drew, while Samuel Savian split points with Wesley So. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave also drew with fellow Frenchman Alireza Firouzja.

As eight rounds loom ahead in the $350,000 prize-money tournament, Gukesh and Abdusattorov sit at the bottom, eager to reclaim their momentum in the upcoming rounds. —*PTI*

Alcaraz, Swiatek win Cincinnati Open

ST LOUIS, 19 AUG

Carlos Alcaraz won the Cincinnati Open title in a little more than 20 minutes after top-ranked Jannik Sinner was forced to retire because of illness during the first set.

Meeting in the final for the fourth time this year and first since Wimbledon, Sinner fell behind 5-0 in the first set with nine unforced errors. He was seen with an icepack on his head during a break and retired after playing just 22 minutes.

"Didn't feel great from yesterday," Sinner said. "Also during the night, I thought I would recover a bit better, but it was not the case. I just tried to go out for the fans, trying to give a match. But it was not meant to be for me today."

It was only the third time the Cincinnati Open men's final ended in a retirement, and the first since 2011 when Novak Djokovic stopped playing in the second set because of a shoulder injury. Alcaraz, who is ranked No. 2, now holds a 9-5 advantage in his matchups with the Italian

- It was only the third time the Cincinnati Open men's final ended in a retirement, and the first since 2011 when Novak Djokovic stopped playing in the second set because of a shoulder injury.

Meanwhile, third-ranked Iga Swiatek captured the Cincinnati Open title for the first time by defeating No. 7 Jasmine Paolini 7-5, 6-4. Swiatek had failed to advance past the semifinals in her six previous appearances at the Cincinnati Open.

"It means a lot to me," Swiatek said. "This year I really wanted it. I'm just very happy. It's nice to check off the list another tournament that I haven't won. I have friends here. It's a nice, relaxed tournament before New York."

Swiatek has won all six meetings against the Italian, dropping only one set in those matches. —*PTI*

AS PRICES DOUBLE

Feather shortage ruffles Indian badminton

NEW DELHI, 19 AUG

Indian badminton is confronting an unprecedented shuttlecock crisis, with prices of imported feather shuttles more than doubling over the past year due to a severe shortage of raw materials in China.

A report by French daily L'Equipe attributes the crunch to changing food habits in China—where pork is preferred over duck and goose—leading to reduced poultry farming. Simultaneously, a global surge in badminton's popularity has spiked demand.

India's chief national coach Pullela Gopichand said the sport must move away from natural feather shuttles. "More people playing badminton is great, but unless synthetic or lab-grown options are developed, we'll face serious challenges. I'm confident we'll see a breakthrough within five years," he told PTI.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

His Hyderabad academy reportedly has less than two weeks' worth of shuttle stock. Badminton Association of India (BAI) secretary Sanjay Mishra confirmed that supplies for national camps will stabilise post August 20, following assurances from Yonex.

Yonex India MD Karan Dhar said shipments are being fast-tracked but admitted the crisis is structural. "This is a raw material issue. Prices have surged, and players are struggling to afford them. Even if manufacturing shifts out of China, feather supply is still China-dependent," he noted.

Efforts are underway to develop viable synthetic alternatives.

Meanwhile, calls are growing for government intervention to reduce GST and import duties on shuttles.

India has limited shuttle production in Kerala and West Bengal, but quality and scale remain a challenge.

Gopichand urged Indian research institutions to step in: "We cannot rely on Chinese poultry trends to sustain badminton globally." —*PTI*

Babar Azam and Rizwan demoted in PCB central contracts

LAHORE, 19 AUG

Former captain Babar Azam and current ODI skipper Mohammad Rizwan have been demoted to Category 'B' in the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) latest central contracts list, announced on Tuesday. In a notable change, the PCB has opted not to include any players in the elite Category 'A', placing a total of 30 players across Categories 'B', 'C', and 'D'.

"The contracts, effective from 1 July, 2025, through 30 June, 2026, reflect the Board's continued commitment to recognising and supporting national talent," the PCB stated in a media release. This cycle sees ten players in each of the B, C, and D categories, with no players selected for Category A. The PCB has refrained from disclosing the contract valuations.

The downgrade for Babar and Rizwan comes in response to their underwhelming performances during key events. —*PTI*